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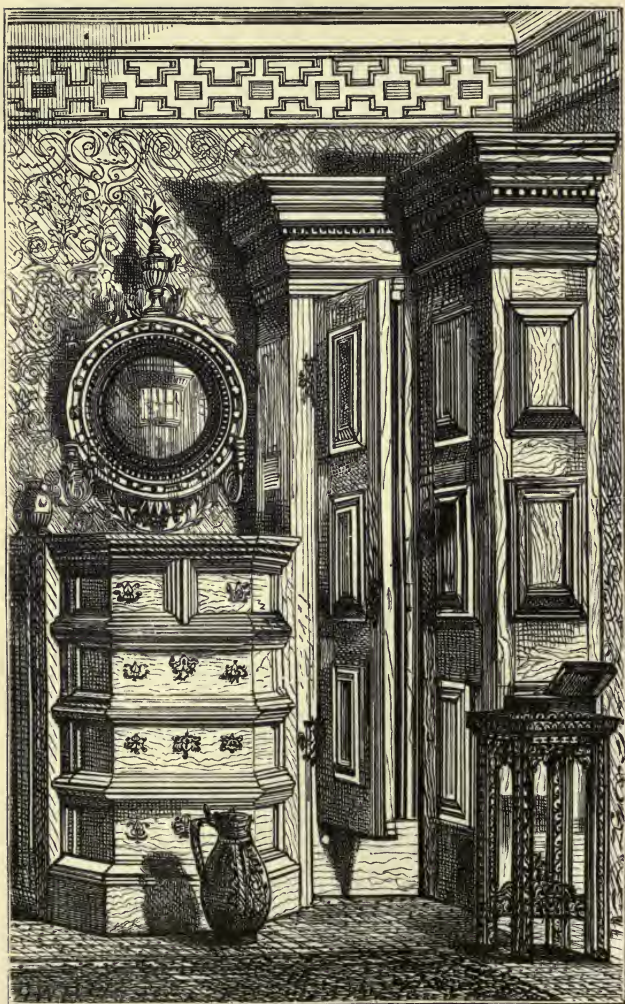
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THE BEDROOM AND BOUDOIR.





THE
BEDROOM AND BOUDOIR.

BY
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PREFACE.

ASO much attention can scarcely be expended on our sleeping rooms in order that we may have them wholesome, convenient and cheerful. It is impossible to over-estimate the value of refreshing sleep to busy people, particularly to those who are obliged to do much brainwork. In the following pages will, we hope, be found many hints with regard to the sanitary as well as the ornamental treatment of the bedroom.

W. J. LOFTIE.



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THE BED-ROOM AND BOUDOIR.

CHAPTER I.

AN IDEAL BED-ROOM.—ITS WALLS.



It is only too easy to shock some people, and at the risk of shocking many of my readers at the outset, I must declare that very few bed-rooms are so built and furnished as to remain thoroughly *sweet*, fresh, and airy all through the night. This is not going so far as others however. Emerson repeats an assertion he once heard made by Thoreau, the American so-called "Stoic,"—whose senses by the way seem to have been preternaturally acute—that "by night every dwelling-house gives out a bad air, like a slaughter-house." As this need not be a necessary consequence of sleeping in a room, it remains to be discovered why one's first impulse on entering a bed-room in the morning

should either be to open the windows, or to wish the windows were open. Every one knows how often this is the case, not only in small, low, ill-contrived houses in a town, but even in very spacious dwellings, standing too amid all the fragrant possibilities of the open country. It is a very easy solution of the difficulty to say that we ought always to sleep with our windows wide open. The fact remains that many people cannot do so ; it is a risk—nay, a certainty—of illness to some very young children, to many old people, and to nearly all invalids. In a large room the risk is diminished, because there would be a greater distance between the bed and window, or a space for a sheltering screen. Now, in a small room, where fresh air is still more essential and precious, the chances are that the window might open directly on the bed, which would probably stand in a draught between door and fireplace as well.

I take it for granted that every one understands the enormous importance of having a fireplace in each sleeping-room in an English house, for the sake of the ventilation afforded by the chimney. And even then a sharp watch must be kept on the housemaid, who out of pure “cussedness” (there is no other word for it) generally makes it the serious business of her life to keep the iron flap of the register stove shut down, and so to do

away entirely with one of the uses of the chimney. If it be impossible to have a fireplace in the sleeping-room, then a ventilator of some sort should be introduced. There is, I believe, a system in use in some of the wards of St. George's Hospital and in the schools under the control of the London School Board, known as Tobin's Patent. Ventilation is here secured by means of a tube or pipe communicating directly with the outer air, which can thus be brought from that side of the building on which the atmosphere is freshest. If report can be trusted, this system certainly appears to come nearer to what is wanted than any with which we are yet acquainted, for it introduces fresh air without producing a draught, and the supply of air can be regulated by a lid at the mouth of the pipe. A sort of double-star is often introduced in a pane of glass in the window, but this is somewhat costly, and it would not be difficult to find other simpler and more primitive methods, from a tin shaft or loosened brick in a wall, down to half a dozen large holes bored by an auger in the panel of the door, six or eight inches away from the top, though this is only advisable if the door opens upon a tolerably airy landing or passage. If it does not, then resort to some contrivance, as cheap as you please, in the outer wall leading

directly into the fresh air. In most private houses it is generally possible to arrange for those to whom an open window at night is a forbidden luxury, that they should sleep with their door open. A curtain, or screen, or even the open door itself will ensure the privacy in which we all like to do our sleeping, but there should then be some window open on an upper landing, day and night, in all weathers. Believe me, there are few nights, even in our rigorous climate, where this would be an impossibility. Of course common sense must be the guide in laying down such rules. No one would willingly admit a fog or storm of driving wind and rain into their house, but of a night when the atmosphere is so exceptionally disturbed it is sure to force its way in at every cranny, and keep the rooms fresh and sweet without the necessity of admitting a large body of air by an open window.

Supposing then that the laws of ventilation are understood and acted upon, and that certain other sanitary rules are carried out which need not be insisted upon here,—such as that no soiled clothes shall ever, upon any pretence, be kept in a bedroom,—then we come to the next cause of want of freshness in a sleeping-room:—Old walls. People do not half enough realise, though it must be admitted

they understand a great deal more than they once did, how the emanations from the human body are attracted to the sides of the room and stick there. It is not a pretty or poetical idea, but it is unhappily a fact. So the only thing to be done is to provide ourselves with walls which will either wash or clean in some way, or are made originally of some material which neither attracts nor retains these minute particles.

Nothing can be at once cleaner or more wholesome than the beautiful wainscotted walls we sometimes see in the fine old country houses built in Queen Anne's reign. A bedroom of that date, if we except the bed itself, and the probable absence of all bathing conveniences, presented a nearly perfect combination of fresh air, spotless cleanliness, and stately and harmonious beauty to the eyes of an artist or the nose of a sanitary inspector. The lofty walls of panelled oak, dark and lustrous from age and the rubbing of many generations of strong-armed old-fashioned housemaids, were walls which could neither attract nor retain objectionable atoms, and ventilation was unconsciously secured by means of high narrow windows, three in a row, looking probably due south, and an open chimney-place, innocent of "register stoves" or any other contrivance for blocking up its wide throat. Such a room

rises up clearly before the eyes of my mind, and I feel certain that I shall never forget the deliciously quaint and hideous Dutch tiles in the fireplace, nor the expressive tip of Ahasuerus' nose in the tile representing his final interview with Haman. How specially beautiful was the narrow carved ledge, far above one's head, which served as a mantelpiece, over which simpered a faded lady with low, square-cut boddice, her fat chin held well into the throat, and a rose in her pale, wan little hand. A dado ran round this room about five feet from the floor, and I used to be mean enough, constantly, to try if it was a dust-trap, but I never could find a speck. That was because the housemaid had been taught how to wipe dust off and carry it bodily away, not merely, as Miss Nightingale complains, to disturb it from the place where it had comfortably settled itself, and disperse it about the room.

But what I remember more vividly in this room than even its old-time beauty, was the thorough *conscientiousness* of every detail. The cornice might fairly claim to rank as a work of art, not only from its elaboration, but from its finish. The little square carved panels on each side of the chimney, serving as supports to the mantelpiece, held but one leaf or arabesque flourish apiece,

yet each corner was as sharply cut, each curve as smoothly rounded, as though it had been intended for closest scrutiny. The wood of neither walls nor floors had warped nor shrunk in all these years, and the low solid doors hung as true, the windows opened as easily, as if it had all been built yesterday. What do I say? built yesterday? Let any of us begin to declare his experience of a new, modern house, and he will find many to join in a doleful chorus of complaints about unseasoned wood, ill-fitting joists, and hurried contrivances to meet domestic ills, to say nothing of the uncomfortable effects of "scamped" work generally. In spite of our improved tools, and our greater facilities for studying and copying good designs, I am convinced that one reason why we are going back in decorative taste to the days of our great grandmothers is, that we are worn out and wearied with the evanescent nature of modern carpenter's and joiner's work—to say nothing of our aroused perceptions of its glaring faults of taste and tone. Unhappily we cannot go back to those dear, clean, old oaken walls. They would be quite out of the reach of the majority of purses, and would be sure to be imitated by some wretched sham planking which might afford a shelter and breeding-place for all kinds of creeping things. No; let those

who are fortunate enough to possess or acquire these fine old walls treasure them and keep them bright as their grandmothers did ; not *whitewash* them, as actually has been done more than once by way of "lightening" the room. And who shall say, after that, that the Goths have ever been successfully driven back ?

I dwell on the walls of the bedroom because I believe them to be the most important from a sanitary as well as from a decorative point of view, and because there is really no excuse for not being able to make them extremely pretty. You may tint them in distemper of some delicate colour, with harmoniously contrasting lines at the ceiling, and so be able to afford to have them fresh and clean as often as you choose, or you may paint them in oils and have them washed constantly. But there is a general feeling against this cold treatment of a room which, above all others, should, in our capricious climate, be essentially warm and comfortable. The tinted walls are pretty when the curtains to go with them are made of patternless cretonne of precisely the same shade, manufactured on purpose, with exactly the same lines of colour for bordering. I am not sure, however, that the walls I individually prefer for a bed-room are not papered. There are papers made expressly, which do not

attract dirt, and which can be found of lovely design. A bedroom paper ought never to have a distinct, spotted pattern on it, lest, if you are ill, it should incite you to count the designs or should "make faces at you." Rather let it be all of one soft tint, a pearly gray, a tender sea-shell pink, or a green which has no arsenic in it; but on this point great care is requisite. You should also make it your business to see, with your own eyes, that your new paper, whatever its pattern or price, is not hung *over* the old one, and that the walls have been thoroughly stripped, and washed, and dried again before it is put on.

Bedroom walls, covered with chintz, stretched tightly in panels, are exceedingly clean and pretty, but they must be arranged so as to allow of being easily taken down and cleaned. The prettiest walls I ever saw thus covered, were made of chintz, with a creamy background and tendrils of ivy of half a dozen shades of green and brown artfully blended, streaming down in graceful garlands and sprays towards a dado about four feet from the ground. It was a lofty room, and the curtains, screens, &c., were made to match, of chintz, with sprays of ivy, and a similar border. I know other bedroom walls where fluted white muslin is stretched over pink or blue silk (prettiest of all over an apple-green *batiste*). I dislike tapestry

extremely for bedroom walls; the designs are generally of a grim and ghostly nature, and even if they represent simpering shepherds and shepherdesses, they are equally tiresome. There is a Japanese paper, sometimes used for curtains, which really looks more suitable and pretty when serving as wall-hangings in the bedrooms of a country house. I know a whole wing of "bachelors' quarters" papered by fluted Japanese curtains, and they are exceedingly pretty. The curtains of these rooms are of workhouse sheeting lined and bordered with Turkey red, and leave nothing to be desired for quaint simplicity and brightness. I must ease my mind by declaring here that I have a strong prejudice against Japanese paper except when used in this way for wall decoration. The curtains made of it are not only a sham, pretending to be something which they are not—a heinous crime in my eyes—but they are generally of very ugly patterns, and hang in stiff, ungraceful folds, crackling and rustling with every breath of air, besides being exceedingly inflammable.

Of course the first rule in bedroom decoration, as in all other, is that it should be suitable to the style of the house, and even to the situation in which the house finds itself. The great point in the wall-decoration of a town bedroom is that you should be able to replace it easily when it gets

dirty, as it is sure to do very soon if your windows are kept sufficiently open. I *have* known people who kept the windows of both bed and sitting-rooms always shut for fear of soiling the walls. I prefer walls, under such conditions, which can be cheaply made clean again perpetually. There are wall-papers by the score, artistically simple enough to please a correct taste, and sufficiently cheap not to perceptibly shrink the shallowest purse.

But in the country it is every one's own fault if they have not a lovely bedroom. If it be low, then let the paper be suitable—something which will not dwarf the room. I know a rural bedroom with a paper representing a trellis and Noisette roses climbing over it; the carpet is shades of green without any pattern, and has only a narrow border of Noisette roses; the bouquets, powdered on the chintzes, match, and outside the window a spreading bush of the same dear old-fashioned rose blooms three parts of the year. That is a bower indeed, as well as a bedroom. Noisette roses and rosebuds half smothered in leaves have been painted by the skilful fingers of the owner of this room on the doorhandles and the tiles of the fire-place as well as embroidered on the white quilt and the green cover of the writing-table. But then I acknowledge it is an exceptionally pretty room to begin with, for the dressing-table

stands in a deep bay window, to which you ascend by a couple of steps. Belinda herself could not have desired a fairer shrine whereat to worship her own beauty.

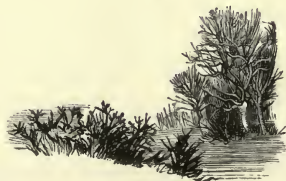
The memory of other walls rises up before me ; even of one with plain white satiny paper bordered by shaded pink ribbon, not merely the stiff paper-hanger's design, but cut out and fixed in its place by a pair of clever hands. This border of course looked different to anything else of the kind I had ever seen ; but according to strict rules of modern taste it was not "correct." Yet a great deal depends on the way a thing is done. I see the Misses Garrett frowning as I go on to say that here and there a deep shadow was painted under it, and its bows and ends drooped down at the corners of the room, whilst over the fireplace they made the bright, circling border for a chalk drawing of a rosy child's head. But it *was* a pretty room, notwithstanding its original faulty design, and I describe it more as an illustration of the supremacy of a real genius for decoration over any hard and fast rule than as an example to be copied. Rules are made for people who cannot design for themselves, and original designs may be above rules, though they should never be above taste.

I might go on for ever describing bedroom walls instead of only insisting on their possessing the

cardinal virtues of cleanliness and appropriateness. Whether of satin or silk, of muslin or chintz, or of cheapest paper, nothing can be really pretty and tasteful in wall decoration which is not scrupulously clean, without being cold and glaring, and it should be in harmony with even the view from the windows. Every room should possess an air of individuality—some distinctive features in decoration which would afford a clue to the designer's and owner's special tastes and fancies. How easy it is to people old rooms with the imaged likeness of those who have dwelt in them, and how difficult it would be to do as much for a modern bower!

If I had my own way, I would accustom boys as well as girls to take a pride in making and keeping their bedrooms as pretty and original as possible. Boys might be encouraged to so arrange their collections of eggs, butterflies, beetles, and miscellaneous rubbish, as to combine some sort of decorative principle with this sort of portable property. And I would always take care that a boy's room was so furnished and fitted that he might feel free, there at least, from the trammels of good furniture. He should have bare boards with only a rug to stand on at the bed-side and fire-place, but he should be encouraged to make with his own hands picture-frames, bookcases, brackets, anything he liked, to adorn his room,

and this room should be kept sacred to his sole use wherever and whenever it was possible to do so. Girls might also be helped to make and collect tasteful little odds and ends of ornamental work for their own rooms, and shown the difference between what is and is not artistically and intrinsically valuable, either for form or colour. It is also an excellent rule to establish that girls should keep their rooms neat and clean, dust their little treasures themselves, and tidy up their rooms before leaving them of a morning, so that the servant need only do the rougher work. Such habits are valuable in any condition of life. An eye so trained that disorder or dirt is hideous to it, and a pair of hands capable of making such conditions an impossibility in their immediate neighbourhood, need be no unworthy addition to the dowry of a princess.





CHAPTER II.

CARPETS AND DRAPERIES.



IN the very old-fashioned, stately rooms of Queen Anne's reign the carpeting was doled out in small proportions, and a somewhat comfortless air must have prevailed where an expanse of floor was covered here and there by what we should now characterise as a shabby bit of carpeting. In fact a suitable floor-covering or appropriate draperies for these old rooms is rather a difficult point. Modern tastes demand comfort and brightness, and yet there is always the dread of too glaring contrasts, and an inharmonious groundwork. Quite lately I saw a fine old-time wainscotted room, whose walls and floor had taken a rich dark gloss from age, brightened immensely and harmoniously by four or five of those large Indian cotton rugs in dark blue and white, to be bought now-a-days cheaply enough in Regent

Street. The china in this room was of Delft ware, also blue and white, and it had *short* full curtains of a bright French stuff, wherein blue lines alternated with a rich red, hanging in the deep windows, whilst colour was given in a dusky corner by a silken screen of embroidered



peonies. A Turkish carpet is of course inadmissible in a bedroom, and the modern Persian rugs are too gaudy to harmonise well with the sober tone of a wainscotted bedroom, but it is quite possible to find delicious rugs and strips of carpeting in greenish blue copied

from Eastern designs. The difficulty is perhaps most simply met by a carpet of a very dark red, with the smallest possible wave or suggestion of black in it, either in strips or in a square, stopping short within two feet or so of the walls, I know a suite of old-fashioned bedrooms where the floor is covered with quite an ecclesiastical-looking carpet, and it looks very suitable, warm and bright, and thoroughly in keeping. In a house of moderate size there is nothing I like so much as the whole of a bedroom floor being carpeted in the same way—landings, passages, dressing-rooms, and all—and on the whole, taking our dingy climate into consideration, a well-toned red carpet or nondescript blue will generally be found the most suitable.

Strange to say, next to red carpets white ones wear the best, but they make such a false and glaring effect, that they cannot be considered appropriate even for a pretty bowery bedroom, half dressing-room, half boudoir. With ordinarily fair wear white carpets only take a creamy tint as they get older, and then their bouquets and borders, have a chance of fading into better harmony. But most of the designs of these carpets are so radically wrong, so utterly objectionable from the beginning, that the best which can be hoped from time is that it will obliterate them altogether. It is true we flatter

ourselves that we have grown beyond the days of enormous boughs and branches of exaggerated leaves and blossoms daubed on a crude ground, but *have* we escaped from the dominion of patterns, more minute it is true, but quite as much outside the pale of good taste? What is to be said in defence of a design which, when its colours are fresh, is so shaded as to represent some billowy and uneven surface, fastened at intervals by yellow nails? or spots of white flowers or stars on a grass-green ground? The only carpet of that sort of white and green which I ever liked had tiny sprays of white heather on a soft green ground, in the miniature drawing-room of a Scotch shooting-box. *There*, it was so appropriate, so thoroughly in keeping with even the view out of the windows, with the heathery chintz, the roe-deer's heads on the panels of the wall, that it looked better on the floor than anything else could possibly have done. Morris has Kidderminster carpets for bedrooms, in pale pink, buff, and blue, &c., which are simply perfect in harmony of colour and design.

People who consider themselves good managers are very apt to turn the half worn-out drawing-room carpet into one of the bedrooms, but this is not a good plan, for it seldom matches the draperies, and is also apt to become frowsy and

fusty. I am not so extravagant as to recommend that a good carpet with plenty of possibilities of wear yet in it should be thrown away because it is not suitable for a bedroom. There are many ways and means of disposing of such things, and even the threadbare remains of an originally good and costly carpet can find a market of its own. What I should like to see, especially in all London bedrooms, is a fresh, inexpensive carpet of unobtrusive colours, which can be constantly taken away and cleaned or renewed, rather than a more costly, rich-looking floor-covering, which will surely in time become and remain more or less dirty. But light carpets are seldom soft in tone, and I should be inclined to suggest felt as a groundwork, if the bare boards are inadmissible, with large rugs thrown down before the fireplace, dressing and writing-tables, &c. These should of course contrast harmoniously with the walls. If you have a room of which the style is a little too sombre, then lighten it and brighten it by all the means in your power. If it be inclined to be garish and glaring, then subdue it.

People cannot always create, as it were, the place in which they are obliged to live. One may find oneself placed in a habitation perfectly contrary to every principle of correct taste as well as opposed to one's individual preferences. But that

is such an opportunity! out of unpromising materials and surroundings you have to make a room, whether bedroom or boudoir, which will take the impression of your own state. As long as a woman possesses a pair of hands and her work-basket, a little hammer and a few tin-tacks, it is hard if she need live in a room which is actually ugly. I don't suppose any human being except a gipsy has ever dwelt in so many widely-apart lands as I have. Some of these homes have been in the infancy of civilisation, and yet I have never found it necessary to endure, for more than the first few days of my sojourn, anything in the least ugly or uncomfortable. Especially pretty has my sleeping-room always been, though it has sometimes looked out over the snowy peaks of the Himalayas, at others, up a lovely New Zealand valley, or, in still earlier days, over a waving West Indian "grass-piece." But I may as well get out the map of the world at once, and try to remember the various places to which my wandering destiny has led me. All the moral I want to draw from this geographical digression is that I can assert from my own experience—which after all is the only true standpoint of assertion—that it is possible to have really pretty, as well as thoroughly comfortable dwelling-places even though they may lie thousands of miles away from

the heart of civilisation, and hundreds of leagues distant from a shop or store of any kind. I mean this as an encouragement—not a boast.

Chintz is what naturally suggests itself to the inquirer's mind as most suitable for the drapery of a bedroom, and there is a great deal to be said in its favour. First of all, its comparative cheapness and the immense variety of its designs. Cretonnes are comely too, if care be taken to avoid the very gaudy ones. If there is no objection on the score of difficulty of keeping clean, I am fond, in a modern bedroom, of curtains all of one colour, some soft, delicate tint of blue or rose, with a great deal of patternless white muslin either over it or beneath it as drapery to the window. This leaves you more free for bright, effective bits of colour for sofa, table-cover, &c., and the feeling of the window curtains can be carried out again in the screen. A bedroom, to be really comfortable, should always have one or even two screens, if it be large enough. They give a great air of comfort to a room, and are exceedingly convenient as well as pretty. The fashion of draped toilet tables is passing away so rapidly that they cannot be depended upon for colour in a room, though we get the advantage in other ways. So we must fall back upon the old idea of embroidered quilts once more to help with colour and tone in our

bedrooms. They are made in a hundred different and almost equally pretty designs. Essentially modern quilts for summer can be made of lace or muslin over pink or blue batiste or silk to match the tints of the room ; quilts of linen embroidered with deliciously artistic bunches of fruit or flowers at the edge and corners ; quilts of eider-down covered with silk, for preference, or if our means will not permit so costly a material, then of *one* colour, such as Turkey red, in twilled cotton. I have never liked those gay imitation Indian quilts. They generally "swear" at everything else in the room.

But there are still more beautiful quilts of an older style and date. I have seen some made of coarse linen, with a pattern running in parallel strips four or six inches wide, formed by pulling out the threads to make the groundwork of an insertion. The same idea looks well also when carried out in squares or a diamond-shaped pattern. Then there are lovely quilts of muslin embroidered in delicate neutral tints, which look as if they came straight from Cairo or Bagdad, but which have never been out of England, and owe their lightness and beauty to the looms of Manchester.

One of the prettiest and simplest bedrooms I know had its walls covered with lining paper of

the very tenderest tint of green, on which were hung some pretty pastel sketches, all in the same style. The chintzes, or rather cretonnes, were of a creamy white ground with bunches of lilacs powdered on them, and the carpet, of a soft green, had also a narrow border with bouquets of lilacs at each corner. The screens were of muslin over lilac batiste, and the quilt of the simple bedstead had been worked by the owner's own fingers, of linen drawn out in threads. The very tiles of the fireplace—for this pretty room had an open hearth with a sort of basket for a coal fire in the middle—and the china of the basin-stand as well as the door-handles and plates, were all decorated with the same flower, and although essentially a modern room in a modern house, it was exquisitely fresh and uncommon. This was partly owing to the liberal use of the leaves of the lilac, which are in form so exceedingly pretty.

In an old-fashioned house if I wanted the draperies and quilt of my bedroom to be thoroughly harmonious I should certainly go to the Royal School of Art Needlework in the Exhibition Road for designs, as they possess extraordinary facilities for getting at specimens of the best early English and French needlework, and they can imitate even the materials to perfection. I saw some curtains the other day

in a modern boudoir from this Royal School of Art Needlework. They were of a delicate greenish blue silk-rep, which hung in delicious round folds and had a bold and simple design of conventionalised lilies in a material like Tussore silk *appliqué*-d with a needlework edge. Of course they were intended for a purely modern room, but there were also some copies of draperies which went beautifully with Chippendale chairs and lovely old straight up and down cupboards and settees.

There is rather a tendency in the present day to make both bedrooms and boudoirs gloomy; a horrible vision of a room with walls the colour of a robin's egg (dots and all) and *black* furniture, rises up before me, and the owner of this apartment could not be induced to brighten up her gloom by so much as a gay pincushion. Now our grandmothers understood much better, though probably no one ever said a word to them about it, how necessary it was to light up dark recesses by contrasts. You would generally have found an exquisite old blue and white Delft jar full of scented rose leaves, a gay beau-pot full of poppies, or even a spinning-wheel with its creamy bundle of flax or wool bound by a scarlet ribbon, in the unregarded corner of a dingy passage, and I think we do not bear in mind enough how bright and gay the costumes of those days used to be. To

a new house, furnished according to the present rage for old-fashioned decoration, our modern sombre apparel is no help. We do not lighten up our rooms a bit now by our dress, except perhaps in summer, but generally we sit, clad in dingiest tints of woollen material, or in very inartistic black silk, amid furniture which was originally designed as a sort of background to much gay and gallant clothing, to flowered sacques and powdered heads, to bright steel buttons and buckles and a thousand points of colour and light. Let us follow their old good example thoroughly, if we do it at all, and do our best to brighten the dull nooks and corners which will creep into all dwellings, by our attire, as well as in all other ways.





CHAPTER III.

BEDS AND BEDDING.



WHEN we discuss a bedroom, the bed ought certainly to be the first thing considered. Here at least, is a great improvement within even the last forty or fifty years. Where are now those awful four-posters, so often surmounted by huge wooden knobs or plumes of feathers, or which even offered hideously carved griffin's heads to superintend your slumbers? Gone, "quite gone," as children say. At first we ran as usual into the opposite extreme, and bestowed ourselves at night in frightful and vulgar frames of cast iron, ornamented with tawdry gilt or bronze scroll-work, but such things are seldom seen now, and even the cheap common iron or brass bedstead of the present day has at least the merit of simplicity. Its plain rails at foot and head are a vast improvement on the fantastic patterns of

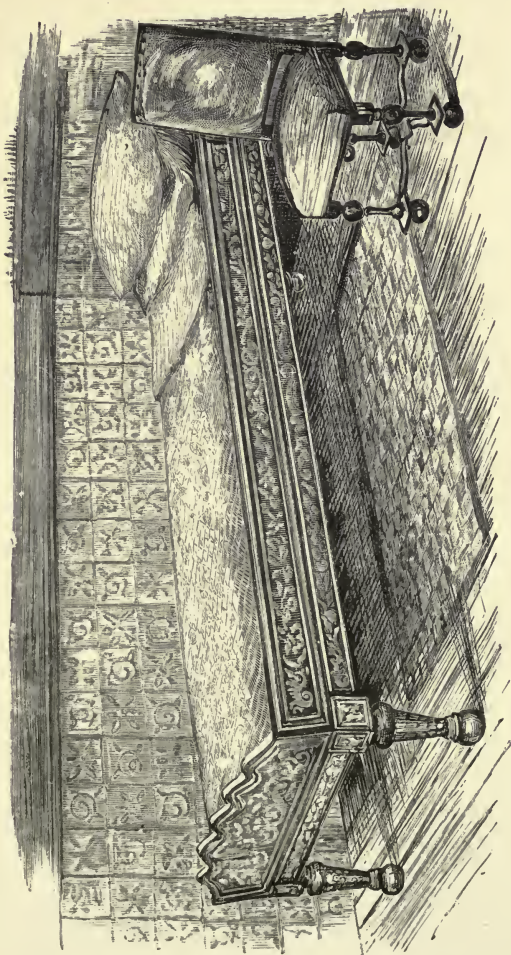


FIG. 1.

even twenty years ago, and the bedsteads of the present day will long continue in general use in modern houses. Their extreme cheapness and cleanliness are great points in their favour, and when they are made low, and have a spring frame with one rather thick mattress at the top, they are perfectly comfortable to sleep in besides being harmless to look at.

But in many rooms where the style of both decoration and furniture has been carried back for a century and a half, and all the severe and artistic lines of the tastes of those days must needs be preserved, then indeed an ordinary iron or brass bedstead, of ever so unobtrusive a pattern would be ludicrously out of place. Still, if our minds revolt from anything like a return to the old nightmare-haunted huge Beds of Ware, we can find something to sleep on which will be in harmony with the rest of the surroundings, and yet combine the modern needs of air and light with the old-fashioned strictness of form and beauty of detail. Here is a drawing (Fig. 1) made from an old Dutch bedstead by Mr. Lathrop. The sides are of beautifully and conscientiously inlaid work, whilst the slight outward slope of both the head and foot-board insures the perfection of comfort. To avoid a too great austerity of form, the upper cap of the foot-board has been cut in curves, and the

solidity of the legs modified ever so slightly. The bedding of this bedstead must by no means project beyond its sides, but must fit into the



FIG. 2.

box-like cavity intended to receive it. In this bedstead (Fig. 2), which was made from a design

by Mr. Sandier, more latitude is allowed in this respect, and its perfect simplicity can only be equalled by its beauty.

The form of wooden bedstead (Fig. 3), which could easily be copied at all events in its general idea, by any village carpenter, would be exceedingly pretty and original for a young girl's bedroom. It is intended to be of oak with side rails which are to pass through carved posts, and be held by wooden pins, as are also the end rails. For durability as well as simplicity this design leaves nothing to be desired, and it can be made in almost any hard wood, whilst every year would only add to its intrinsic worth. How many of us mothers have taken special delight in preparing a room for our daughters when they return from school "for good"—when they leave off learning lessons out of books, and try, with varied success, to learn and apply those harder lessons, which have to be learned without either books or teachers.

What sumptuous room in after years ever affords the deep delight of the sense of ownership which attends the first awakening of a girl in a room of her very own? and it is a vivid recollection of this pure delight of one's own bygone girl-days which prompts us to do our best to furbish up ever so homely a room for our eldest daughter. If a

pretty, fresh carpet is unattainable, then let us have bare boards, with rugs, or skins, or whatever is available. Necessity develops ingenuity, and ingenuity goes a long way. I never learned the meaning of either word until I found myself very far removed from shops, and forced to invent or



FIG. 2.

substitute the materials wherewith to carry out my own little decorative ideas.

Some very lofty rooms seem to require a more furnished style of bed, and for these stately sleeping-places it may be well to have sweeping curtains of silk or satin gathered up quite or almost

at the ceiling, and falling in ample straight folds on either side of a wide, low bedstead. They would naturally be kept out of the way by slender arms or brackets some six or eight feet from the floor, which would prevent the curtains from clinging too closely round the bed, and give the right lines to the draperies. But, speaking individually, it is never to such solemn sleeping-places as these, that my fancy reverts when, weary and travel-stained, and in view of some homely wayside room, one thinks by way of contrast, of other and prettier bedrooms. No, it is rather to simple, lovely little nests of chintz and muslin, with roses inside and outside the wall, with low chairs and writing table, sofa and toilet all in the same room—a bedroom and bower in one. Edgar Allan Poe declares that to

“ slumber aright
You must sleep in just such a bed.”

But he only says it of the last bed of all. Without going so far as that, I can declare that I have slumbered “aright” in extraordinary beds, in extraordinary places, on tables, and under them (that was to be out of the way of being walked upon), on mats, on trunks, on all sorts of wonderful contrivances. I slept once very soundly on a piece of sacking stretched between two bullock trunks, though my last waking thought was an uneasy

misgiving as to the durability of the frail-looking iron pins at each end of this yard of canvas, which fitted into corresponding eyelet holes in the trunks. I know the uneasiness of mattresses stuffed with chopped grass, and the lumpiness of those filled by amateur hands with wool—*au naturel*. Odours also are familiar unto me, the most objectionable being, perhaps, that arising from a feather bed in a Scotch inn, and from a seaweed mattress in an Irish hotel, in which I should imagine many curious specimens of marine zoology had been entombed by mistake.

But there is one thing I want to say most emphatically, and that is that I have met with greater dirt and discomfort, worse furniture, more comfortless beds (I will say nothing of the vileness of the food!), and a more general air of primitive barbarism in inns and lodgings in out-of-the-way places in Great Britain and Ireland, than I have ever come across in any colony. I know half-a-dozen places visited by heaps of tourists every year, within half-a-dozen hours' journey of London, which are *far* behind, in general comfort and convenience, most of the roadside inns either in New Zealand or Natal. It is very inexplicable why it should be so, but it is a fact. It is marvellous that there should often be such dirt and discomfort and general shabbiness and dinginess under circum-

stances which, compared with colonial difficulties, including want of money, would seem all that could be desired.

However, to return to the subject in hand. We will take it for granted that a point of equal importance with the form of the bedstead is its comfort but this must always be left to the decision of its occupant. Some people prefer beds and pillows of an adamantine hardness, others of a luxurious softness. Either extreme is bad, in my opinion. As a rule, however, I should have the mattresses for children's use *rather* hard—a firm horsehair on the top of a wool mattress, and children's pillows should *always* be low. Some people heap bed-clothes over their sleeping children, but I am sure, this is a bad plan. I would always take care that a child was quite warm enough, especially when it gets into bed of a winter's night, but after a good temperature has been established I would remove the extra wraps and accustom the child to sleep with light covering. A little flannel jacket for a young child who throws its arms outside the bed-clothes is a good plan, and saves them from many a cough or cold. In the case of a delicate, chilly child, I would even recommend a flannel bed-gown or dressing-gown to sleep in in the depth of winter, for it saves a weight of clothes over them. I never use a quilt at night for children; it keeps

in the heat too much, but blankets of the best possible quality are a great advantage. The cheap ones are heavy and not nearly so warm, whereas a good, expensive blanket not only wears twice as long, but is much more light and wholesome as a covering. Nor would I permit soft pillows; of course there is a medium between a fluff of down and a stone, and it is just a medium pillow I should recommend for young children and growing girls and boys. The fondest and fussiest parents do not always understand that, on the most careful attention to some such simple rules depend the straightness of their children's spines, the strength of their young elastic limbs, their freedom from colds and coughs, and in fact their general health. Often the daylight hours are weighted by a heavy mass of rules and regulations, but few consider that half of a young child's life should be spent in its bed. So that unless the atmosphere of the room they sleep in, the quality of the bed they lie on, and the texture of the clothes which cover them, are taken into consideration, it is only half their existence which is being cared for.

All bedsteads are healthier for being as low as possible; thus insuring a better circulation of air above the sleeper's face, and doing away with the untidy possibility of keeping boxes or carpet-bags



FIG 4



under the bedstead. There should be no valance to any bedstead. In the daytime an ample quilt thrown over the bedding will be quite drapery enough, and at night it is just as well to have a current of air beneath the frame of the bed. The new spring mattresses are very nearly perfect as regards the elasticity which is so necessary in a couch, and they can be suited to all tastes by having either soft or hard horsehair or finely picked wool mattresses on the top of them. Whenever it is possible, I would have children put to sleep in separate bedsteads, even if they like to have them close together as in Fig. 4.

There are many varieties of elastic mattresses, though I prefer the more clumsy one of spiral springs inclosed in a sort of frame. For transport this is, however, very cumbrous, and in such a case it would be well to seek other and lighter kinds. It must be also remembered that these spring mattresses are only suitable for modern beds in modern rooms; the old carven beds of a "Queen Anne" bedroom must needs be made comfortable by hair and wool mattresses only.

In many cases, however, where economy of space and weight has to be considered, I would recommend a new sort of elastic mattress which can easily be affixed to any bedstead. It

resembles a coat of mail more than anything else and possesses the triple merit in these travelling days of being cool, clean, and portable.

The frowsy old feather bed of one's infancy has so completely gone out of favour that it is hardly necessary to place one more stone on the cairn of abuse already raised over it by doctors' and nurses' hands. A couple of thick mattresses, one of horsehair and one of wool, will make as soft and comfortable a bed as anyone need wish for.

Instead of curtains, which the modern form of bedstead renders incongruous and impossible, screens on either side of the bed are a much prettier and more healthy substitute. I like screens immensely ; they insure privacy, they keep out the light if necessary, and are a great improvement to the look of any room. It is hardly necessary to say they should suit the style of its decoration. If you are arranging a lofty old-fashioned room, then let your screens be of old Dutch leather—of which beautiful fragments are to be found—with a groundwork which can only be described by paradoxes, for it is at once solid and light, sombre and gay. Any one who has seen those old stamped leather screens of a peculiar sea-green blue, with a raised dull gold arabesque design on them, will know what I mean. There are also beautiful old

Indian or Japan lacquered screens, light, and with very little pattern on them; even imitation



FIG. 5.

ones of Indian pattern paper are admissible to narrow purses, but anything real is always much

more satisfactory. If again your bower is a modern Frenchified concern, then screen off its angles by *écrans* of gay tapestry or embroidered folding leaves, or paper-covered screens of delicate tints with sprays of trailing blossom, and here and there a bright-winged bird or butterfly. Designs for all these varieties of screens can be obtained in great perfection at the Royal School of Art Needlework. But for a simple modern English bedroom, snug as a bird's nest, and bright and fresh as a summer morning I should choose screens of slender wooden rails with fluted curtains of muslin and lace cunningly hung thereon. Only it must be remembered that these entail constant change, and require to be always exquisitely fresh and clean.

It often happens that another spare bed is wanted on an emergency, and it is a great point in designing couches for a nondescript room, a room which is some one person's peculiar private property, whether called a den or a study, a smoking-room or a boudoir, that the said couch should be able "a double debt to pay" on a pinch. I have lately seen two such resting-places which were both convenient and comfortable. The first was a long, low settee of cane, with a thin mattress over its seat, and a thicker one, doubled in two, forming a luxurious back against the wall

by day. At night, this mattress could be laid flat out on the top of the other, which gave increased width as well as softness to the extempore bed.

The other, of modern carved oak, had been copied from the pattern of an old settle. It was low and wide, with only one deep well-stuffed mattress, round which an Algerine striped blue and white cotton cloth had been wrapped. Of course this could be removed at night, and the bed made up in the usual way. It struck me, with its low, strong railing round three sides, as peculiarly suitable for a change of couch for a sick child, though it could hardly be used by a full-grown person as a bed.

So now all has been said that need be on the point of a sleeping place. It is too essentially a matter of choice to allow of more than suggestion; and at least my readers will admit that I am only arbitrary on the points of fresh air and cleanliness.



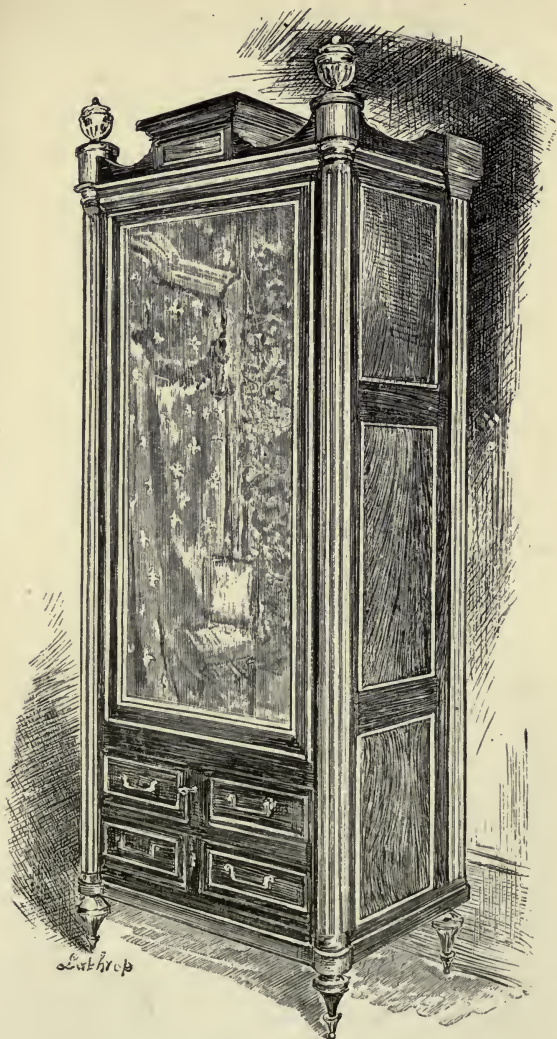


CHAPTER IV.

WARDROBES AND CUPBOARDS.



SOMETIMES a room has to play the part of both bedroom and boudoir, and then it is of importance what form the "*garde-robes*" shall assume. Fortunately there are few articles of furniture on which more lavish pains have been bestowed, and in which it is possible to find scope for a wider range of taste and choice. Recesses may be fitted up, if the room be a large one, and have deep depressions here and there in the masonry with doors to match the rest of the woodwork, panelled, grained, and painted exactly alike, and very commodious hanging cupboards may thus be formed. But however useful these may be to the lady's maid, they are scarcely æsthetic enough to be entitled to notice among descriptions of art furniture. Rather let us turn to this little wardrobe (Fig. 6), too narrow,





perhaps, for aught but a single gown of the present day to hang in, yet exquisitely artistic and pleasant to look upon. Its corner columns are mounted with brass, and every detail of its construction is finished as though by the hand of a jeweller. The lower drawers are probably intended for lace or fur, or some other necessary of a fine lady's toilette. It is very evident from the accommodation provided in the distant days when such wardrobes were designed, that "little and good" used to be the advice given to our grandmothers with their pin-money, and that even in their wildest dreams they never beheld the countless array of skirts and polonaises and mantles and Heaven knows what beside, that furnish forth a modern belle's equipment. Yet these moderate-minded dames and damsels must have loved the garments they did possess very dearly, for the heroine of every poem or romance of the last century is represented as depending quite as much on her clothes in the battle of life as any knight on his suit of Milan mail. Clarissa Harlowe mingles tragic accounts of Lovelace's villanies with her grievances about mismatched ruffles and tuckers, and even the excellent Miss Byron has by no means a soul above court suits or French heels. Still these lovely ladies had not much space assigned to them wherein to bestow their finery when it was not on

their backs, and we must expect to find all the wardrobe designs of former times of somewhat skimpy proportions. Here is an antique lock-up (Fig. 7) of French make (most of the best designs for furniture came from France in those days) of a



FIG. 7.

very practical and good form to copy in a humbler material. This is made of a costly wood, probably rosewood, with beautifully engraved brass fittings all over it. The door of the upper half seems

rather cumbrous, being only a flap which opens out all in one piece, but a modern and less expensive copy might be improved by dividing this large lid into a couple of doors to open in the middle



FIG. 8.

in the usual way, without at all departing from the original lines.

Fig. 8, again, is more of a bureau, and affords but scanty room for the ample stores of a lady's

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lingerie. It is, however, of a very good design in its way, its chief value being the workmanship of its fine brass ornaments. The handles of the drawers are peculiarly beautiful, and represent the necks and heads of swans issuing from a wreath of leaves. It would look particularly well in a bedroom in a large old-fashioned country house, where the rest of the furniture is perhaps rather cumbrous as well as convenient, and the glitter of the metal mounting would help to brighten a dingy corner. It cannot, however, be depended upon to hold much, and is chiefly valuable in a decorative sense, or as a stand for a toilette glass.

In strong contrast to these two designs is Fig. 9 of modern Japanese manufacture. It is easy to see that the original idea must have been taken from a common portable chest of drawers, such as officers use. The slight alteration in its arrangement is owing to Japanese common sense and observation, for it would have required more strength of character than a cockney upholsterer possesses, to divide one of the parts so unequally as in this illustration. But the male heart will be sure to delight specially in that one deep drawer for shirts, and the shallow one at the top for collars, pocket-handkerchiefs, neckties, and so forth. The lower drawers would hold a moderate supply of clothes, and the little closet contains three small drawers, besides a secret

place for money and valuables. When the two boxes, for they are really little else, are placed side by side they measure only three feet one inch long, three feet four high, and one foot five deep. They

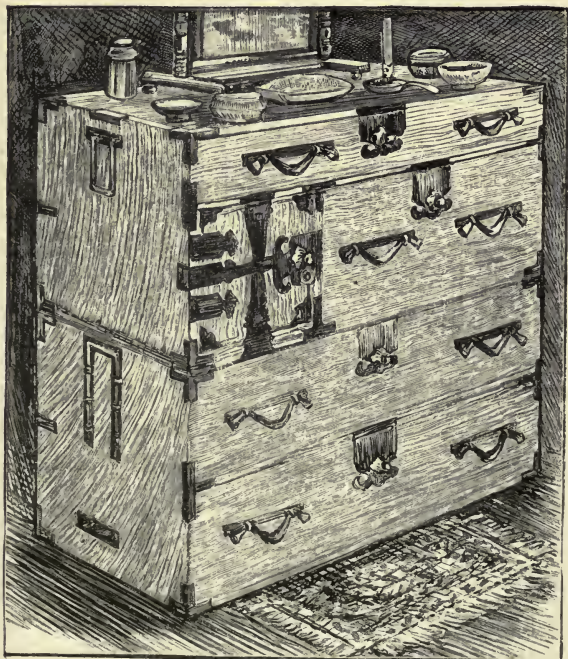


FIG. 9.

hardly appear, from the prominence of the sliding handles, intended to be packed in outer wooden cases as portable chests of drawers usually are; but it must be remembered that in Japan they

would be carried from place to place slung on poles carried on men's shoulders. There is a good deal of iron used in the construction, which must be intended to give strength, but it does not add to the weight in any excessive degree, for it is very thin. The wood is soft and light, and rather over-polished, but the Japanese artist would have delighted in varnishing it still more, and covering it with grotesque gilt designs in lacquer, if he had been allowed. On page 55 will be found a roomy Chinese cupboard with drawers and nicely-carved panels.

Many of our most beautiful old Indian chests of drawers and cabinets have this black ground with quaintest bronze or brazen clamps and hinges, locks and handles, to give relief to the sombre groundwork. Except that the drawers seldom open well, and are nearly always inconveniently small, they are the most beautiful things in the world for keeping clothes in, but it would certainly be as well to have, out of the room in a passage, some more commodious and commonplace réceptacles. I have seen a corridor leading to bedrooms, lined on each side with wardrobes, about six or seven feet high, consisting merely of a plain deal top with divisions at intervals of some five feet from top to bottom. A series of hanging cupboards was thus formed, which had been lined with stretched brown holland, furnished with innumerable pegs, and closed in by

doors of a neat framework of varnished deal with panels of fluted chintz. Besides these doors to each compartment, an ample curtain hung within, of brown holland, suspended by rings on a slender iron rod ; and this curtain effectually kept out all dust and dirt, and preserved intact the delicate fabrics within. Such an arrangement must have been, I fear, far more satisfactory to the soul of the lady's maid than the most beautiful old Indian or French chest of drawers.

For rooms which are not old-fashioned in style, and in which it is yet not possible to indulge in French *consoles* or Indian cabinets as places to keep clothes in, then I would recommend the essentially modern simple style of wardrobe and chest of drawers. I would eschew "gothic," or "mediæval," or any other style, and I would avoid painted lines as I would the plague. But there are perfectly simple, inoffensive wardrobes to be procured of varnished pine or even deal (and the former wears the best) which, if it can only be kept free from scratches, is at least in good taste and harmony in a modern, commonplace bedroom. It is quite possible, however by the exercise of a little ingenuity to dispense with modern, bought wardrobes, and to invent something which will hold clothes, and yet be out of the beaten track. I happened only the other day, to come across so

good an example of what I mean,¹ that I feel it ought to be described. First of all, it must be understood that the bedroom in question was a small one, in a London house recently decorated and fitted up in the style which prevailed in Queen Anne's reign, and to which there is now such a decided return of the public taste. The other portions of the furniture were in accordance with the original intention of the room and consisted of a very beautiful, though simple, carved oaken bedstead, and a plain spindle-legged toilette table and washstand, also old in design. The chairs were especially fine, having been bought in a cottage in Suffolk, and yet they matched the bedstead perfectly. They had substantial rush-bottomed seats, but the frame was of fine dark oak, and the front feet spread out in a firm, satisfactory fashion giving an idea of solidity and strength. The fireplace was tiled after the old style, and the mantelpiece consisted of a couple of narrow oak shelves, about a dozen inches apart, connected by small pillars. These ledges afforded a stand for a few curious little odds and ends, and on the top shelf stood some specimens of old china. But the difficulty remained about the wardrobe, for the room was too small to admit old *bureaus* which would only hold half a dozen articles of clothing.

¹ See Frontispiece.

So the ingenious owner devised a sort of corner cupboard to fit into an angle of the room, and to match the rest of the woodwork in colour and style, having old brass handles and plates like those on

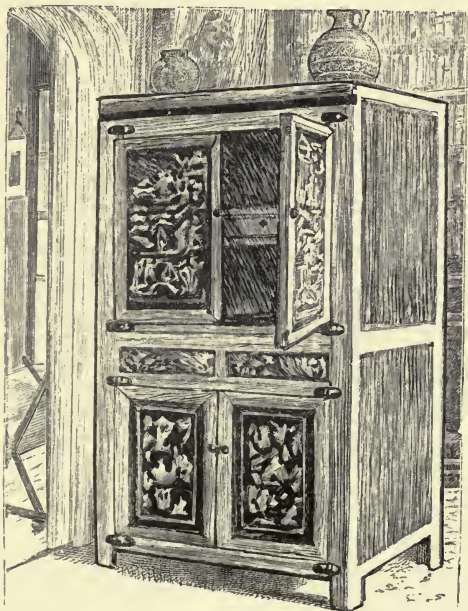


FIG. 10.

the doors. It is a sort of double cupboard; that is to say, whilst the left-hand side is a hanging wardrobe which only projects away from the wall sufficiently to allow the dresses to be hung up properly, the right-hand division is a chest of

drawers. Not a row of commonplace drawers, however. No ; the front surface is broken by the introduction of little square doors and other arrangements, for bonnets, &c. We must bear in mind these drawers extend much higher than usual, and the cornice being nearly on a level with that of the wardrobe, there can be no possibility of putting boxes and so forth on the top ; but then, on the other hand, a goodly range of drawers of differing depth is provided. It certainly seemed to me an excellent way of meeting the difficulty ; and I also noticed in other bedrooms in the same house how odd nooks and uneven recesses were filled in by a judicious blending of cupboard and wardrobe which is evidently convenient in practice as well as exceedingly quaint yet correct in theory.



CHAPTER V.

FIRE AND WATER.



PERHAPS the part of any room which is most often taken out of, or put beyond the decorative hands of its owner, is the fireplace. And yet, though it is one of the most salient features in any English dwelling, it is, nine cases out of ten, the most repulsively ugly. When one thinks either of the imitation marble mantelpiece, or its cotton velvet and of false-lace-bedizened shelves, the artistic soul cannot refrain from a shudder. The best which can be hoped from an ordinary modern builder is that he will put in harmless grates and mantelpieces, and abstain from showy designs. The fireplace in either bedroom or boudoir should not be too large, nor yet small enough to give an air of stinginess, out of proportion to everything else. Here are two (Figs. 11 and 14). The design of

each is as simple as possible, of plainest lines, but with no pretence of elaborate sham splendour. Fig. 11 is of course only suitable for a small unassuming room, but if the tiles were old Dutch ones and the rest of the bedroom ware quaint blue and white Delft, an effect of individuality and suitability would be at once attained. Such a fire-

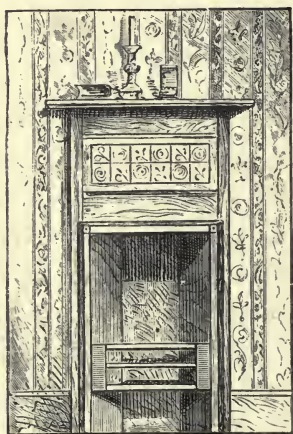


FIG. 11.

place would look best in a room with wall-paper of warm neutral tints of rather an old-fashioned design, and I should like a nice straight brass fender in front of it almost as flat as a kitchen fender with delightful possibilities of sociable toe-toasting about it.

Such a one I came

across lately that had been "picked up" in the far east of London. It was about eighteen inches high, of a most beautiful simple, flat, form with a handsome twist or scroll dividing the design into two parts. Although blackened to disguise by age and neglect at the time of its purchase, it shone when I saw it, with that peculiar brilliant and yet softened sheen which you never get except

in real old brass ; a hue seldom if ever attained in modern brazen work however beautiful the design may be. This fender stood firmly—a great and especial merit in fenders—on two large, somewhat projecting, feet, and its cheerful reflections gave an air of brightness to the room at once.

There must always be plenty of room for the fire, and the actual grate should of course be so set as



FIG. 12.

to throw all the warmth into the room. Then, though it is rather a digression,—only I want to finish off the picture which rises up before me,—I would have a couple of chairs something like this (Fig. 12), and just such a table for a book or one's hair-brushes a little in front of these two chairs. And then what a gossip must needs ensue ! Of course I would have a trivet on the fire, or before it. No bedroom can look really

comfortable without a trivet and a kettle ; a brass kettle for preference, as squat and fat and shining as it is possible to procure. There are charming kettles to be found, copied from Dutch designs.

Instead of the ordinary wide low mantelpiece one sees in bedrooms, I am very fond of two narrower shelves over such a fireplace as this. They are perhaps best plain oak, divided and supported by little turned pillars, and if the top shelf has a ledge half way a few nice plates look especially well. But there are such pretty designs for mantelpieces now to be procured, that it would be a waste of time to describe any particular style, and most fireplaces are made on scientific principles of ventilation. Nor is it, I hope, necessary to reiterate the injunction about every part of the decoration and detail of a room, whether fixture or moveable, matching or suiting all the rest. In some instances contrast is the most harmonious arrangement one can arrive at, but this should not be a matter lightly taken in hand. A strong feeling is growing up in favour of the old-fashioned open fireplaces lined with tiles, and adapted to modern habits by a sort of iron basket on low feet in the centre, for coals. Excellent fires are made in this way, and I know many instances where the prettiest possible effect has been attained. In a country where wood is

cheap and plentiful, the basket for coals may be done away with and the fuel kept in its place by sturdy "dogs," for which many charming hints have been handed down to us by our grandfathers. Over the modern fireplace, even in a bedroom, a mirror is generally placed, but I would not advise it unless the room chanced to be so dingy that every speck of light must be procured by any means. Still less would I have recourse to the usual stereotyped gilt-framed bit of looking glass. In such a private den as we are talking about, all sorts of little eccentricities might be permitted to the decorator. I have seen a looking-glass with a flat, narrow frame, beyond which projected a sort of outer frame also flat, wherein were mounted a series of pretty little water-colour sketches, and another done in the same way with photographs—only these were much more difficult to manage artistically, and needed to be mounted with a back-ground of greyish paper. For a thoroughly modern room, small oval mirrors are pretty, mounted on a wide margin of velvet with sundry diminutive brackets and knobs and hooks for the safe bestowal of pet little odds and ends of china and glass, with here and there a quaint old miniature or brooch among them. In old, *real* old rooms anything of this sort would, however, be an impossibility, for the mantelshelf would

probably be carried up far over the owner's head who might think herself lucky if she could ever reach, by standing on tip-toe, a candlestick off

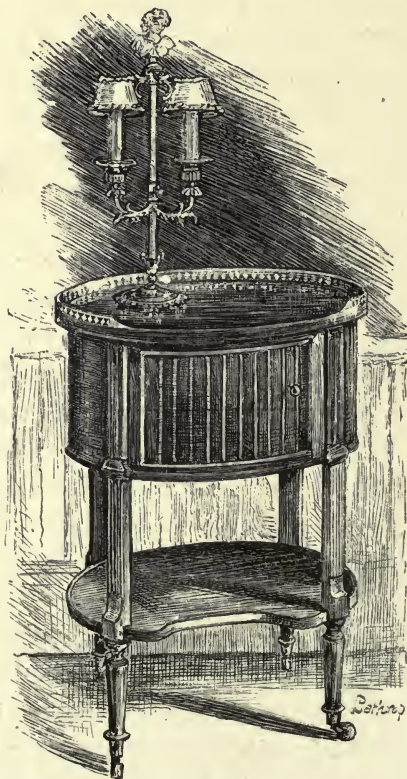


FIG. 13.

its narrow ledge. Our grandmothers seemed to make it their practice to hang their less choice

portraits in the space above the mantelpiece, and to this spot seem generally to have been relegated

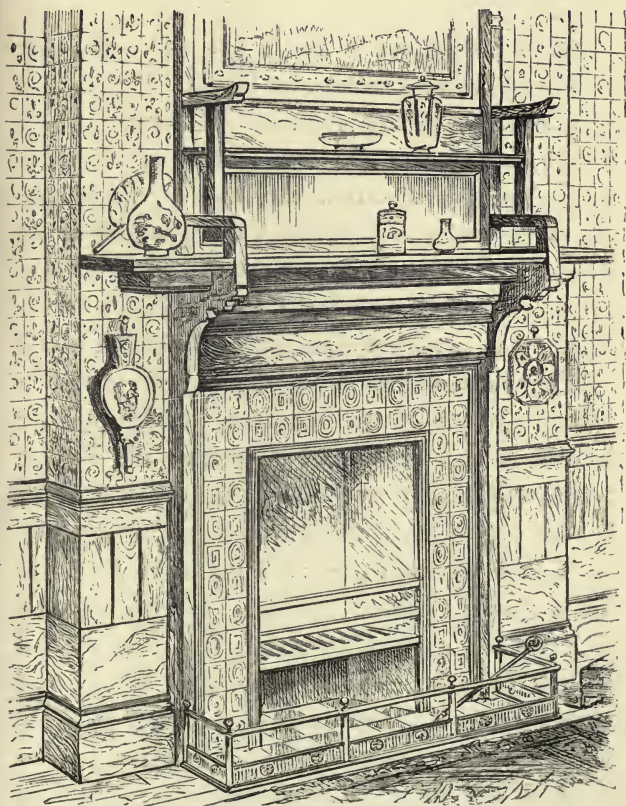


FIG. 14.

the likenesses of disagreeable or disreputable, or, to say the least, uninteresting members of the family ;

the successful belles and heroes occupying a more prominent place downstairs. Fig. 14 shows a pretty arrangement of picture, mirror and shelves for china.

Before the subject of fire is laid aside, we must just touch upon candles and lamps. Fig. 13 is a simple and ordinary form of candlestick, which would be safe enough from risk of fire if these sheltering shades were made, as they often are, of tin, painted green, and then there would be no danger if it stood on a steady table, by the side of even the sleepest student. But perhaps this design (Fig. 15) is the most uncommon, though it would not be safe to put so unprotected a light except in a perfectly safe draughtless place. However, there is also in this branch of decorative art a great variety of beautiful models to choose from. Antique lamps, copied from those exquisite shapes which seem to have been preserved for us in lava and ashes during all these centuries, with their scissors and pin and extinguisher, dangling from slender chains, lamps where modern invention for oil and wick meet and blend with chaste forms and lines borrowed from the old designers, and where the good of the eyesight is as much considered as the pleasure to the eye itself.

Of washing arrangements, it is not possible to speak in any arbitrary fashion. Here is a modern

French washing-stand (Fig. 16) made, however, to close up, which is always an objectionable thing, in my opinion, though it may often be a convenient one, Let your basin invariably be as large as possible and your jug of a convenient form, to hold and pour from. Every basin-stand should be provided

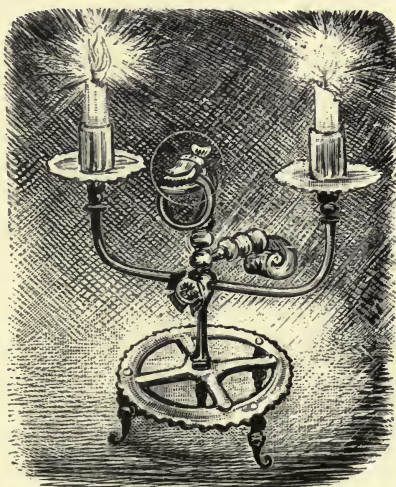


FIG. 15.

with a smaller basin and jug, and allow at the same time, plenty of space and accommodation for sponges and soap. If, from dearth of attendance, it is necessary to have a receptacle in the room, into which the basin may be emptied occasionally during the day, I would entreat that it should be also of china, for the tin ones soon acquire an

unpleasant smell even from soapsuds. But I detest such contrivances, and they are absolutely inadmissible on any other score except economy of service.



FIG. 16.

All bathing arrangements would be better in a separate room, but if this should be impossible, then they should be behind a screen. But indeed

I prefer, wherever it is feasible, to contrive a small closet for all the washing apparatus, and to keep basin-stand, towel-horse, and bath in it.

It is sometimes difficult to hit exactly upon a plan for a washing-stand for a very small room or

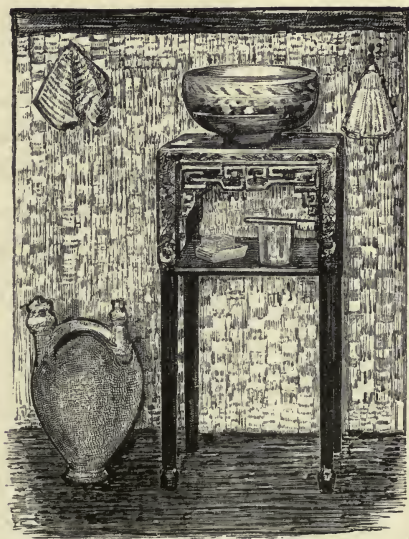


FIG. 17.

corner, and a copy of this Chinese stand (Fig. 17) for a basin and washing appliances, would look very quaint and appropriate in such a situation. Only real, coarse, old Indian, or Japanese china, would go well with it, however, or it might be fitted with one of those wooden lacquered bowls from Siam,

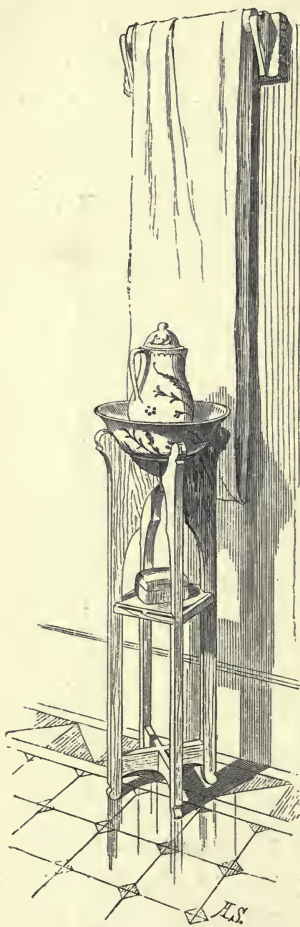


FIG. 18.

and a water-jar from South America of fine red clay, and of a most artistic and delightful form. There are hundreds of such jars to be bought at Madeira for a shilling or two, and they keep water deliciously cool and fresh. If a demand arose for them they would probably be imported in large quantities. All washing-stands are the better for a piece of Indian matting hung at the back, for much necessary flirting and flipping of water goes on at such places, which stains and discolours the wall; but then this matting must constantly be renewed, for nothing can be more forlorn to the eye or unpleasing to the sense of

smell, than damp straw is capable of becoming in course of time.

For the corner of a boy's bedroom, or for the washing apparatus of that very convenient little cupboard or closet or corner which I always struggle to institute *down-stairs*, close to where the gentlemen of the family hang their hats and coats, this (Fig. 18) is a very good design. It is simple in form and steady in build, and a long towel over a roller just behind it will be found useful. The towel need not be so coarse as the kitchen "round" one, from which it is copied; and above all things do not have it *hard*. It is a needless addition to the unavoidable miseries of life to be obliged to dry your hands in a hurry on a new huckaback towel.

Many charming basin-stands have I seen extemporised out of even a shelf in a corner; but such contrivances are perhaps too much of make-shifts to entitle them to mention here, only one hint would I give. Take care that your washing-stand is sufficiently low to enable you to use it with comfort. I once knew a very splendid and elaborate basin-stand, extending over the whole side of a dressing-room, which could only be approached by mounting three long low steps. I always felt thankful when my ablutions had ended and left my neck still unbroken.



CHAPTER VI.

THE TOILET.



HERE is no prettier object in either bedroom or boudoir than the spot where "the toilet stands displayed." Whether it be a shrine *à la Duchesse* (Fig. 19) or the simplest form of support for a mirror, it will probably be the most interesting spot in the room to its fair owner. Consequently there is nothing upon which the old love of decoration has more expended itself even from its earliest days, or which modern upholstery makes more its special study than this truly feminine shrine. I will say nothing of mirrors with three sides which represent you as a female "Cerberus, three ladies in one," or indeed of mirrors of any sort or kind, as our business lies at this moment more with the tables on which they should stand. These can be found or invented of every imaginable form, and contain

every conceivable convenience for receiving and hiding away the weapons which beauty (or rather

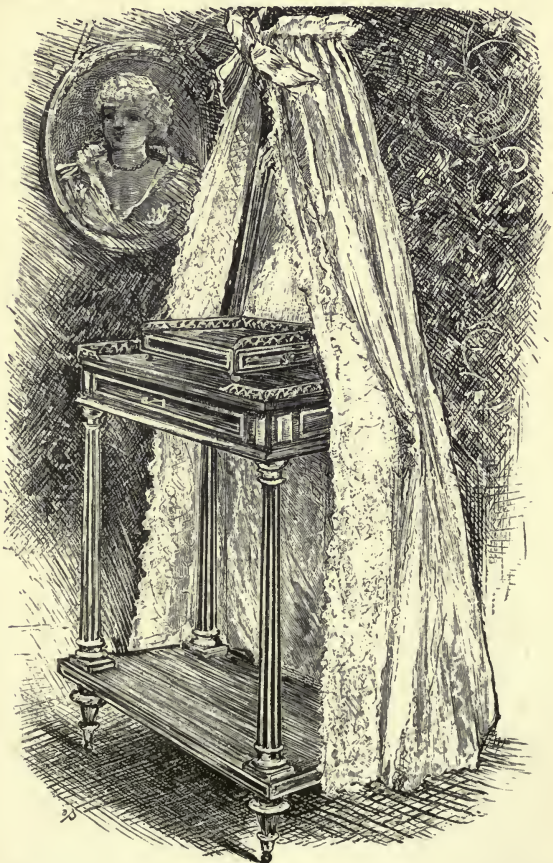


FIG. 19.

would-be-beauty, which is not at all the same thing) requires.

Here (Fig. 20) is a sort of old-fashioned *tiroir* of an exquisite simplicity, and with but little space outside for the "paraphernalia" of odds and ends

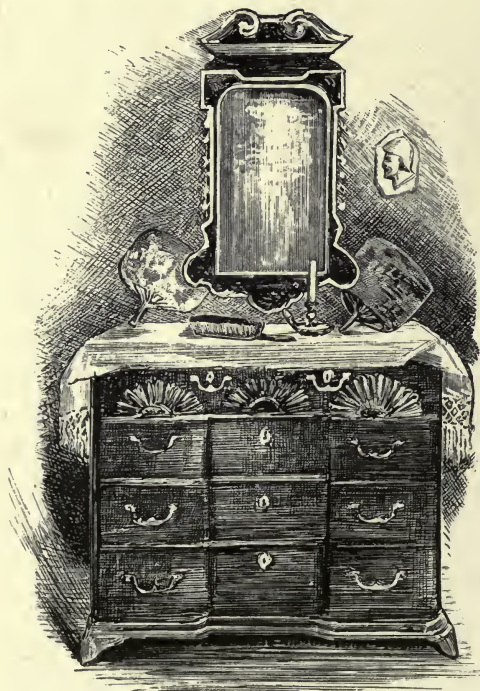


FIG. 20.

which the law generously recognises as the sole and individual property of even a married woman. Such articles would need to be stowed away in

one of its many drawers. Instead of the frivolous drapery which would naturally cover a deal toilet-table, the only fitting drapery for this



FIG. 21.

beautiful old piece of furniture (of French design evidently) would be an embroidered and fringed strip of fine linen which should hang low down on

either side. In a darksome room, imagine how the subdued brightness of its metal mountings would afford coigns of vantage to every stray sunbeam or flickering ray from taper or fire! And in its deep, commodious drawers too, might be neatly stowed away every detail of toilet necessities. On it should stand a mirror which must imperatively be required to harmonise, set in a plain but agreeable frame without anything to mar the severe simplicity of the whole. There are several pieces of old furniture, however, which are better adapted to be used as toilet-tables than the subject of the illustration. Such a piece of furniture is more suitable when it is divided, as is often the case, into three compartments, the centre one being considerably further back than the side-pieces. In this way a place is secured for the knees, when seated at it, and this central cupboard, when filled with shelves, makes an excellent receptacle for brushes and combs, and so forth.

The defect of these old *tiroirs* is that they are rather small and low, and consequently look best in a small room, but they offer great variety of decorative embellishment (Fig. 21), and are very satisfactory, as stands for a small oval toilet-glass in an old frame to match. The designs too of the brass mountings for door and drawer are nearly always exceedingly beautiful, and vary from the simplest

shining ring to a small miracle of artistic brazen work. These shining handles take away a good deal from the severity of decorative treatment which would naturally exist in the rest of the room, and it is under such conditions, where form takes precedence of colour, that we learn the full value of these little traps to attract and keep a warm glitter of light.

Here is a simpler design for a toilet-table (Fig. 22) which would look very well standing between the windows of a lofty room. If it was found that a good light for the looking-glass had been sacrificed to the general harmony of the room, then a smaller glass might be placed *in* a window, just for occasional use.

Some of the old-fashioned "toilet-equipages" are very beautiful just as they have come down to us. They are occasionally made in silver, and comprise many articles which cannot by any possibility be brought within the faith or practice of a modern belle. Still they offer charming forms for imitation, especially in the frames of the old hand-mirrors, whose elaborate simplicity (if one may use such a paradox) puts to shame the more ornate taste of their modern substitutes. Next to silver or tortoise-shell, I like ivory, as the material for a really beautiful and artistic set of toilet appendages, its delicious creamy tint going especially well with all

shades of blue in a room. But I prefer the surface of the ivory kept plain and not grotesquely carved as you get it in China or Japan, for dust and dirt always take possession of the interstices, and lead to the things being consigned to a drawer. Now I cannot endure to possess any thing of any kind which had better be kept out of sight wrapped carefully away under lock and key. My idea of enjoying ownership is for my possession to be of such a nature that I can see it or use it every day—and all day long if I choose—so I shall not be found recommending anything which is “too bright and good for human nature’s daily food.” I have seen toilet-tables under difficulties, that is on board of real sea-going yachts, where it has been necessary to sink a little well into which each brush, box or tray securely fitted; and I have seen toilet-tables in Kafir-Land covered with common sixpenny cups and saucers, and shown as presenting a happy combination of use and ornament, strictly in conformity with “Engleeez fasson.”

But perhaps our business does not lie so much with these as with the ordinary dressing-table which is now more used in the modern shape of a convenient table with a scoop out of the middle, beneath which the knees can fit when you are seated at it, and with a couple of drawers on each side. This too is covered by a white *serviette* of

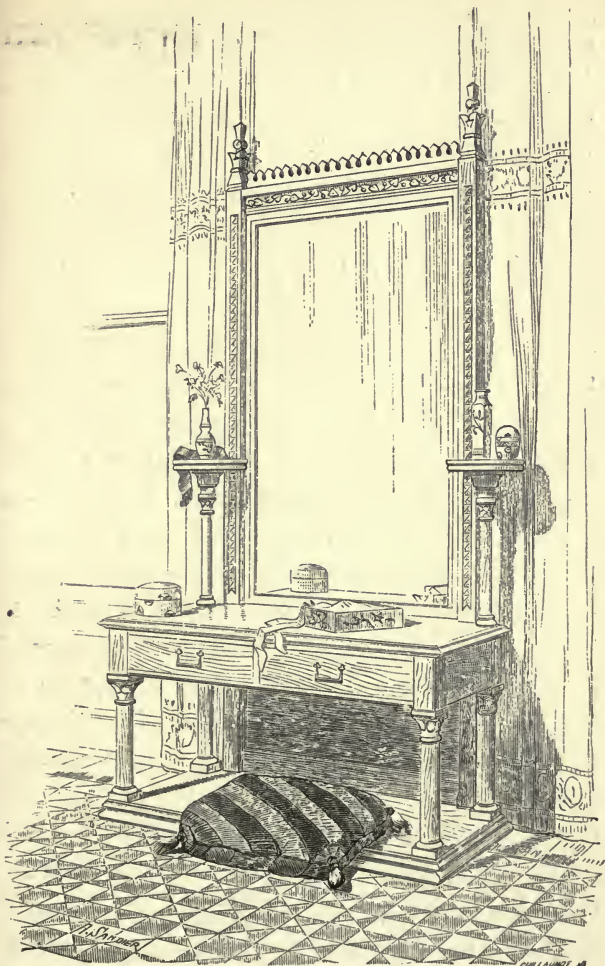


FIG. 22.

some sort, and supports a large toilet-glass of equally uncompromising utility and convenience. But however readily these good qualities may be conceded to the modern toilet-table it is but an uninteresting feature in an ideal bower. If the room be an essentially modern one, and especially if it be in the country, nothing affords a prettier spot of colour in it, than the old-fashioned toilet-table of deal covered with muslin draperies over soft-hued muslin or batiste. Of course the caricature of such an arrangement may be seen any day in the fearful and detestable toilet-table with a skimpy and coarse muslin flounce over a tight-fitting skirt of glaring pink calico, but this is a parody on the ample, convenient stand for toilet necessities, the draperies of which should be in harmony with the other colours of the room. It would need however to possess many changes of raiment, in order that it may always be kept up to the mark of spotless freshness. These draperies are prettier of plain soft white muslin without spot or figure of any kind, and may consist of two or three layers, draped with all the artistic skill the constructor thereof possesses. It is also an improvement, if instead of only a hideous crackle of calico beneath, there be a full flounce or petticoat of batiste which would give colour and graceful folds together. This is a very humble arrangement I know, but

it can be made as effective as if it cost pounds instead of pence. And this is one of the strong points in all hints on decoration, that they should be of so elastic a nature as to be capable of expansion under favourable circumstances, though not beyond the reach of extremely slender resources.

I do not recommend draped mirrors for modern toilet-tables on account of the danger from fire, and I like the style and frame of the looking-glass on the table to harmonise thoroughly with the rest of the furniture.





CHAPTER VII.

ODDS AND ENDS OF DECORATION.



It seems a pity that sofas and chairs made of straw or bamboo should not be more used than they are. I mean, used as they come from the maker's hands, *not* painted or gilded, and becushioned and bedizened into hopeless vulgarity. They are only admissible *au naturel*, and should stand upon their own merits. Those we have as yet attempted to make in England are exceedingly weak and ugly compared with the same sort of thing from other countries. In Madeira, for instance, the chairs, baskets, and even tables, are very superior in strength and durability, as well as in correctness of outline, to those made in England; and when we go further off, to the East, we find a still greater improvement in furniture made of bamboo. Here is a chair (Fig. 23), of a pattern familiar to all travellers on the P. and O. boats, and whose acquaint-

ance I first made in Ceylon. It is essentially a gentleman's chair, however, and as such is sinking into an honoured and happy old age in the dingy



FIG. 23.

recesses of a London smoking-room. Without the side-wings, which serve equally for a table or leg-rest, and with the seat elongated and slightly

depressed, such a chair makes a delicious, cool lounge for a lady's use in a verandah.

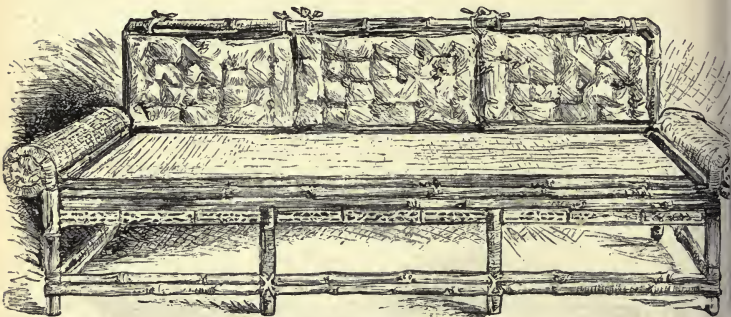


FIG. 24.

Then here (Fig. 24) is a Chinese sofa made of bamboo which, in its own country, would probably not be

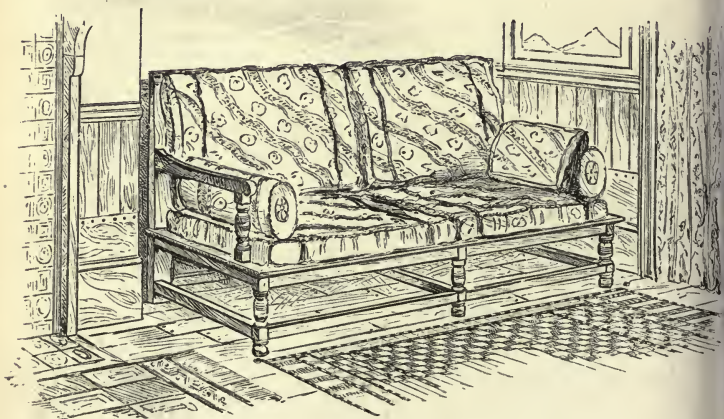


FIG. 25A

encumbered with cushions, for they can be removed

at pleasure. Where, however, there is no particular inducement to use cane or bamboo, then it would be better to have made by the village carpenter a settee—or settle, which is the real word—something like this. The form is, at all events correct; and in a private sitting-room, furnished and fitted to match, the effect would be a thousand times better than the modern couches, which are so often padded and stuffed into deformity.

Nothing can be simpler than the lines of the design, as is seen in this drawing (Fig 25B), without

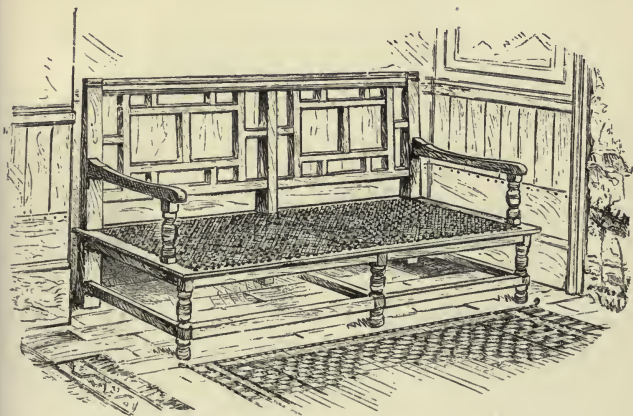


FIG. 25B.

the cushions; and it would come within the scope of the most modest upholstering genius. In one's own little den—which, by the way, I should *never*

myself dignify by the name of boudoir, a word signifying a place to idle and sulk in, instead of



FIG. 26.

a retreat in which to be busy and comfortable—such odds and ends of furniture, so long as there

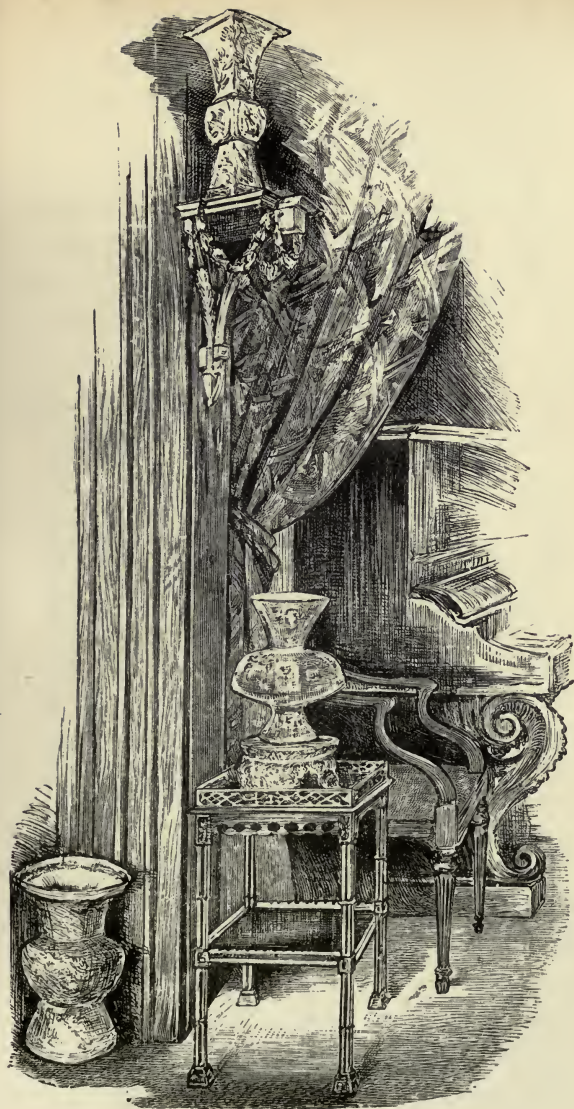


FIG. 27.

be one distinct feeling running through it all, are far more characteristic than commonplace sofas and chairs. If one *must* have large armchairs in a boudoir, or in a bedroom, here is one (Fig. 26) which is big enough in all conscience, and yet would go more harmoniously with an old-fashioned room than any fat and dumpy modern chair. If, on the other hand, the house in general, and this particular room, chances to be essentially in the style of the present day, then you would naturally choose some of the comfortable modern easy-chairs, taking care to avoid the shapes which are a mass of padded and cushioned excrescences. But modern armchairs can be very pretty, and I know several which are low and long, and straight and unassuming, and which yet preserve quite a good distinct outline. Such chairs as these are a sort of half-way house between bed and board, between absolute rest and uncomplaining unrest; famous places for thinking, for watching, for chatting, and, above all, for dozing.

The bedrooms I am thinking of and writing about have, we must bear in mind, a certain element of the bower or boudoir or private sitting-room in them, and so I must stand excused for a suggestion about a place for books or music. Here is a delightful corner for a piano (Fig. 27), but sometimes such a thing is out of the question, and

it is only possible to find space for a few shelves. These can always be made suitable and pretty either of a simple old form in plainest oak to



FIG. 23.

match the severe lines of an old-fashioned room, or of deal painted black, varnished, with a gilt line grooved in front, and a bit of bright leather to go

with a more modern room. To my mind books are always the best ornaments in any room, and I never feel at home in any place until my beloved and often shabby old friends are unpacked and ranged in their recess. I once extemporised a capital book case out of a blocked-up window, and with a tiny scrap of looking-glass let in where the arch of the window began its spring, and filled by some old bowls of coarse but capital old china, whose gaudy colours could only be looked at safely from a distance.

As time goes on, one is sure, in such a beloved little den, to accumulate a great deal of rubbish dear, perhaps, only to the owner for the sake of association. Which of us has not, at some tender time of our lives, regarded a withered flower, or valueless pebble, as our great earthly treasure? So, in later days, a plate, a cup, a pipe will be precious, perhaps, to one as mementoes of the place and companions where and with whom it was bought. But if such trifles, though too dear to be laid aside, are yet not intrinsically good enough to form part of a collection, and to take a prominent share in decoration, then I would either stand them aside on a little *étagère* like that to be found on page 79, or else get the carpenter to put up graduated shelves, which may be quite

pure and simple in taste and yet suit the rest of the room. This (Fig. 28) is a capital valuable hint to keep photographs or prints at hand, and yet in safety. Take my advice, and don't have fringe or mock lace, or gilt nails at the edges by way of decoration. Have a nice piece of wood, walnut, oak, even varnished pine, if you choose, neatly finished off at the edge, or, if it suits the rest of the room, black, with a little narrow gilt line in a depression. I think something ingenious might be done with Japanese tea-trays, taking care to choose good designs.

The worst of such a dear delightful den as I am imagining, or rather describing, is the tendency of the most incongruous possessions to accumulate themselves in it as time goes on. What do you think of a pitcher like this (Fig. 29) standing in one corner, just because, though of common ware, and rather coarsely modelled, the colour of the earthenware is delicious in tone, and the design bold and free? It was brought from South America, and cost only six shillings, or thereabouts, but if it had cost as many pounds it could not have been more thoroughly in harmony with the surroundings of its new home.

One hint may not be out of place here, and that is with respect to table-covers. Many people are fond of covering up writing tables, and every occa-

sional table, with a cloth ; and these draped tables are generally great eyesores in an ill-arranged room. The covers seldom harmonise, and nowadays many hideous pieces of work are accomplished in the name of the School of Art which

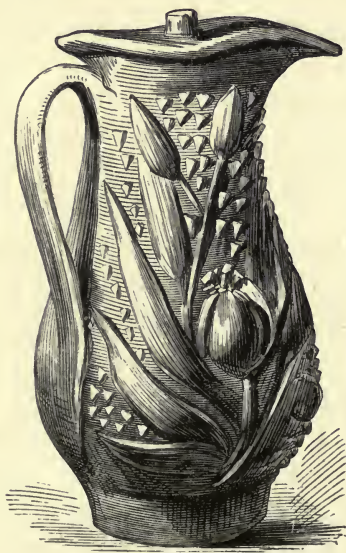


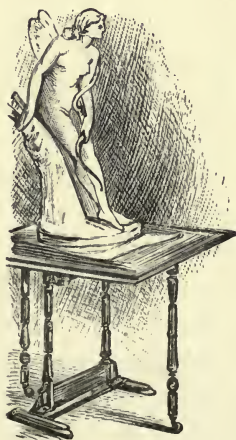
FIG. 29.

are far removed from the artistic and beautiful designs which alone proceed from the School itself. There indeed you may find patterns which would go beautifully with any old-time furniture, and which might be worked on deliciously neutral tints of cloth or serge. But beware of staring, gaudy

table-covers, of shabby material, of which the best that can be hoped is that they may speedily fade into better harmony. The Queen Anne tables were never intended by their designer to be covered up by drapery. They are generally inlaid in delicate designs, which it would be a sin to conceal; nor could we afford to lose the slender grace of the legs. The clumsy, ill-finished cheap table of the present day is all the better for a cover, and wonders may be done in improving a bare, cold, unhappy-looking room, by a good table-cover here and there, or a nicely embroidered sofa-pillow of cloth or satin, or, better still, one of those lovely new low screens, with the tall tufts of grass or lilies which we owe to Walter Crane's skilful pencil.

I confess I like a room to look as if it were inhabited, and that is the only drawback that the rooms furnished in the seventeenth century style have in my eyes. You scarcely ever feel as if any one lived in them—there are seldom any signs of occupation, especially feminine occupation, lying about, no "litter," in fact; litter being a powerful weapon in the hands of a person who knows how to make a room look comfortable. Then I am told that litter is incongruous in a Queen-Anne room, for that the women of those days had not the same modes of employment as ourselves. The

greatest ladies, if they were blessed with an energetic temperament, only gave it free scope with their medicine chest or in their still-room or linen closet; while the lazy ones were obliged to dawdle away a good deal of their time in bed or at their elaborate toilettes. But still I am always longing to overlay a little of the modish primness of the distant days we are now copying, with something of this busy nineteenth century's tokens of a love of art or literature. And in a room with any claim to a distinct individuality of its own, this would always be the case.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE SICK-ROOM.



HOWEVER skilfully designed the arrangements of a house may appear to be, however sumptuously decorated and furnished its rooms, it is impossible to know whether a great law of common sense and practical usefulness has guided such arrangements, until there has been an illness in the house. Then will it be discovered—too late alas!—whether doors and windows open conveniently, whether fireplaces give out proper warmth, how the apparatus for ventilation works, and whether the staircases, landings, cupboards, and a thousand unconsidered items of the architect's labours have been planned in the best possible way, or in the stupidest. For the comfort and convenience of the patient at such times, it is by no means necessary that much money should have been spent on the construction of the house that chances

to shelter him in his hour of suffering, nor that its furnitures or decorations should be of a costly character. Fortunately such things need not aim at anything higher than cleanliness and convenience, and we only require to exert our own recollections in support of this assertion. As far as my individual experience goes, I have seen an old woman, who had been bed-ridden for years, more comfortably housed and tended beneath a cottage roof, and her room kept more exquisitely clean and sweet than that of many wealthy patients in splendid houses. Of course everything depends on the capacity for organisation and arrangement in the person who has charge of the invalid, but the nurse's task may be made much easier by having to perform it in a bedroom and under conditions which are in accordance with the exigencies of such a time.

Many smart and pretty-looking bedrooms are discovered by their sick owner to be very different abodes to what they seemed to him in health. Awkwardly-placed doors and windows produce unsuspected draughts; the too close proximity of an ill-arranged staircase or housemaid's closet becomes a serious trouble, and a low pitched ceiling prevents proper ventilation. It is more difficult than one imagines to find in a badly proportioned room a single convenient place for

the patient's bed. It must be either close to the door, or touching the fireplace, or under a window or in some situation where it distinctly ought *not* to be. I have known such faults—faults which occasioned discomfort every moment, and had to be remedied by a thousand make-shift contrivances, occur in splendid rooms in magnificent houses ; and I have known poor little modern dwellings in a colony to be perfectly free from them. When I am told, “such or such a room or house is a very comfortable one *to be ill in*,” then I know that the construction and arrangement of that abode, however simple it may appear, must needs be up to a very high mark indeed. Of course a great deal can be done to modify existing evils, by a judicious arrangement of screens and curtains, by taking out useless furniture, by substituting a comfortable low bed, easy to get at, for a cumbrous couch where the unhappy patient's nose seems as if it was intended to rub against the ceiling, and various other improvements. But what can remedy a smoky chimney, or a grate where all the heat goes up the chimney, or windows that rattle, and doors that open in every direction except the right one? How can an outside landing or lobby be created at a moment's notice, or a staircase moved a yard further off? Of course if an illness gave notice before it seized its victim,

if people ever realised that a house should be so constructed as to reduce the chances of illness to a minimum, and raise its possible comforts to a maximum if it did come, then everything would go on quite smoothly and we should certainly live, and probably die, happy. But this is exactly what we do not do, and this chapter would never have been written if I had not seen with my own eyes innumerable instances where neither want of money, nor space, nor opportunity for improvement were the causes of a wretchedly uncomfortable sick-room.

I have known bedrooms which looked nests of rosy, luxurious comfort until their owner fell ill, and then turned suddenly, as it seemed, into miserable comfortless abodes of frippery and useless, tasteless finery—where a candle could scarcely be placed anywhere without risk of fire, and where the patient has deeply complained of the way the decorations of the room “worried” her. As a rule, in a severe illness, sick people detest anything like a confusion or profusion of ornaments or furniture. If I am in authority in such a case, I turn all gimcracks bodily out, substituting the plainest articles of furniture to be found in the house. Very few ornaments are allowable in a sick-room, and I only encourage those which are of a simple, correct form. I have known the

greatest relief expressed by a patient, who seemed too ill to notice any such change, at the substitution of one single, simple classical vase for a whole shelf-full of tawdry French china ornaments, and I date the recovery of another from the moment of the removal out of his sight of an exceedingly smart modern dressing-table, with many bows of ribbon and flounces of lace and muslin. I do not mean to say that the furniture of a sick-room need be ugly—only that it should be simple and not too much of it. Nothing confuses and worries a person who is ill like seeing his attendants threading their way through mazes of chairs and sofas and tables; but he will gladly look and find relief and even a weary kind of pleasure in gazing at a table of a beautiful, simple form, placed where it is no fatigue for him to look at it, with a glass of flowers, a terra-cotta vase, a casket, anything which is so intrinsically beautiful in form as to afford repose to the eye.

I have often observed that when people begin to take pleasure in *colour*, it is a sure sign of convalescence—for in severe illness, unless indeed it be of such a nature as to preclude all power of observation, form is of more importance to the patient than colour. One learns a great deal from what people tell one *after* they are well enough to talk of such things as past, distem-

pered fancies. For instance, I was once nursing a typhoid fever patient, who lay for some days in an agony of weakness. He had been deaf as well as speechless, and all his senses appeared to have faded away to the very brink of extinction. Yet afterwards when he became able to talk of his sensations at different stages of his illness, he mentioned that particular time, and I found he had been keenly conscious of the *forms* of the objects around. He spoke of the pleasure which the folds of a curtain had afforded him, of the "comfort" of the shape of the old-fashioned arm-chair in which I used to sit, and of how grateful he had felt when he observed that divers gimcracks had been removed from his sight. Later, as he grew better, and the weary eyes craved for colour, I found it necessary to pretend to be busy dressing dolls or making pincushions, to afford myself an excuse for a little heap of brightest coloured silks and fragments of ribbon placed where he could see them, and the daily fresh bunches of flowers were a perpetual delight to his eyes.

An ideal sick-room then should first of all possess walls which will not weary or worry the sick person, and no *good* pattern will do this. The low bed should be so placed that whilst it would be sheltered from draught (the aid of one or

two screens will be useful here) the light would not fall disagreeably on the patient's eyes. No rule can be given about light. In some cases the sick person loves to look out of the window all day, whilst in others a ray of light *on* the face is agony. In such circumstances the bed should, if possible, be so arranged as to allow the light to come from behind, for it is only in rare and exceptional cases that sunshine as well as outer air may not be admitted daily into a sick-room. We are fast getting beyond the ignorance of a north aspect for a bedroom, and most of us know that sunshine is quite as necessary to a bedroom as to a garden. No children will ever thrive unless they have plenty of sunshine, as well as air in the rooms in which they sleep, and a sick-room should also have both in abundance. If the weather be hot, it is easy, in England, to modify the temperature by means of outer blinds, *persiennes*, open doors, and other means. Few people understand what I have learnt in tropical countries, and that is, how to exclude the outer air during the hot hours of the day. The windows of the nursery or sick-room (for we all need to be treated like children when we are ill) should be opened wide during the early cool, morning-tide, and the room flooded with sun and outer air. Then, by nine or ten o'clock, shut up rigorously

every window, darkening those on which the sun would beat, *out-side* the glass—by means of blinds or outer shutters—until the evening, when they may all be set wide open again. All woollen draperies, curtains and valences should be done away with in a sick-room. If the windows are unsightly without curtains, and the illness is likely to be a long one, then substitute soft, patternless muslin or chintz, or, prettiest of all, white dimity with a gay border, but let there be no places of concealment in a sick-room. Every thing unsightly or inodorous should be kept out of it, and herein is found the convenience of a well-planned and well-arranged house, where clothes-baskets, and things of that sort, can be so bestowed as to be at the same time handy and yet out of the way.

If it were not for the unconceivable untidiness and want of observation which exists in the human race, such cautions as not to leave about the room the clothes the sick person has last worn, hanging up or huddled on a chair in a corner, would seem superfluous. But I have actually seen a girl stricken down by a sudden fever, lying at death's door, on her little white bed, whilst the wreath she wore at the ball where she took the fatal chill, still hung on her toilette glass, and her poor little satin shoes were scattered about the room.

She had been ill for days; there were two ladies'-maids in the house, besides anxious sisters, parents, and nurses, and yet no one had thought of putting these things out of sight. The first rule, therefore, to be observed in nursing even bad colds, where the sufferer may have to stay in bed a few days, is to send all the linen he has been wearing to the wash *at once*; and to put away everything else in its proper place. Boots should never be allowed in a sick-room, for the leather and blacking is apt to smell disagreeably and they ought immediately to be removed to another place.

Then there should be if possible *outside* the door of the sick-room, either on a landing or in another room, a convenient table, covered with a clean, white cloth, on which should be ranged spare spoons, tumblers, glasses, and so forth, and whatever cooling drinks are wanted, all so managed that dust shall be an impossibility. Inside the room, on another small table, or shelf, or top of chest of drawers, according to circumstances, should be kept also on a snowy cloth, just whatever is actually needed at a moment's notice—medicines and their proper glasses, &c., and a spoon or two, but the instant anything is used, it should be an established rule that the nurse puts the spoon or glass *outside*, and supplies its place with a clean

one. In most cases, a servant need only renew the supply outside twice a day.

As for keeping trays with nourishment in the room, it is a sign of such careless nursing that I should hardly dare to mention it, if I had not more than once gone to relieve guard in a friend's splendid sick-room at daylight, and seen the nurse's supper-tray of the night before *on the floor* whilst the room, in spite of all its beautiful decorations, smelt sickly and disgusting with the odour of stale beer and pickles. It is incredible that such things should happen, but in the confusion caused by a sudden and severe illness, untidy and careless habits are apt to come to the surface, and loom largely as aggressive faults. Sickness is not only a great test of the sufferer's own character and disposition, but of those of the people around him, and as a general rule, I have discovered more beautiful qualities in sick people, and those about them, who dwell in cottages or even hovels, than in more splendid homes. Everyone knows how really kind poor people are to each other, and never more so than when the angel of disease or death is hovering over the humble roof-tree.

Food, or nourishment as it is called in sick-room phraseology, would not so often be refused by the patient if it were properly managed. Who

does not know the wearisomeness of being asked, probably in the morning, when the very thought of food is an untold aggravation to one's sufferings what one could "fancy"? And this is probably followed by a discussion on the merits or possibilities of divers condiments, to each of which as it is canvassed before him the wretched patient is sure to declare a deep-rooted repugnance. A sick person, until he reaches that happy stage of convalescence when it is an amusement to him, should never be allowed to hear the slightest discussion on the subject of his nourishment. Whatever the doctor orders should be prepared with as wide a range of variety as can be managed, and offered to him in the smallest permissible quantities, exactly cold or hot enough to take, and served as prettily and daintily as possible, at exactly the right moment. The chances are a hundred to one that, if it is within the range of possibilities that he can swallow at all, he will take it. If he does not, there should be no argument, no attempt at forcing it on him; it should at once be taken quite away and something different brought as soon afterwards as is prudent. Few people realise how extraordinarily keen the sense of smell becomes in illness, and how the faint ghost of a possible appetite may be turned into absolute loathing by the smell of a cup of beef-tea, cooling

by the bed-side for ten minutes before it is offered.

I am always guided in a great degree about nourishment by the instincts of my patient, and I never force stimulants, or anything equally distasteful on a sick person who is at all reasonable upon such matters. I once had a patient to nurse, whose desperate illness had brought him very near the shadowy land. It had left him, and the doctors assured me that his life depended on how much brandy I could get down his throat during the night. I told him this, for he was quite sensible, when he refused the first teaspoonful, and he whispered in gasps, "I'll take as much milk as you like; that stuff kills me." So I gave him teaspoonfuls of pure milk all through the night every five minutes, and not a drop of brandy. The doctor's first reproachful glance in the morning was at the untouched brandy bottle, and he shook his head, but when he had felt the sick man's pulse his countenance brightened, and he graciously gave me permission to go on with the milk. Of course there are cases when the patient never expresses an opinion one way or other, and then the only safe rule is to obey the doctor's orders, but I never fly in the face of any strong instinct of a sick person rationally expressed.

So now I hope we have some glimmering idea of what a sick-room should be: cool in summer, warm in winter, but deliciously sweet and fresh and fragrant always. Simple in its furniture, but the few needful articles, of as agreeable shapes and as convenient as possible—a room which can be looked back upon with a sort of affection as a place of calm, of discipline, and of organization, as well as of the mere kindness and willingness to help, which is seldom, if ever, absent from a sick-room, but which is not the beginning and end of what is necessary within its walls.

There are bed-rests and bed-tables to be hired for a sick person's use in almost any town in England; or, if it is preferred, any village carpenter could make a table with legs six or eight inches high, and a top of a couple of smooth light planks, about two feet six long, scooped out in the middle. This is very convenient when the patient is well enough to sit up in bed and employ himself. The bed-rests are equally simple, the upper half of a chair, padded, and made to lower at convenience, while a loose jacket or wrapper, easy to slip on, of flannel, should also be provided to throw over the patient's shoulders when he uses chair and table. When the patient can sit up and occupy himself this sort of table

will be found a great comfort. It might just as well be used when lying on a sofa.

One word more, like a postscript, for it has no real business to intrude itself here. It is only an



FIG. 30.

entreaty to all nurses or those in authority in a sick-room, to wear the prettiest clothes they possess. Not the smartest, far from it; the simplest cottons, cambrics, what you will, but nice and fresh and pleasant to look at. If it is only a

dressing-gown it may be a charming one. No hanging sleeves, or dangling chains, or streaming ribbons, but sufficient colour for weary eyes to rest on with pleasure. An ideal toilette for sick room nursing would be a plain holland or cambric gown, made with absolute simplicity—long enough to be graceful without possessing a useless train—rather tight sleeves, and no frills or furbelows ; a knot of colour at the throat and in the hair, or on the cap—only let your ribbons be exquisitely fresh and clean—and a nice large apron, or rather bib, with one big pocket in front. This apron may be tied back—not too tightly, please—with the same coloured ribbons, and a little change of hue now and then is a great rest and refreshment in a sick room. There are charming linen aprons now embroidered in School of Art designs of the shape I allude to, but they can be made equally well in print, or plain holland, or linen.

No garment that rustles or creaks, or makes its presence audible should ever cross the threshold, but the toilette of the nurse should always be exquisitely clean and neat, and yet as bright and pretty as possible. No sitting up at night, no anxiety or unhappiness should be an excuse for a dirty, dishevelled attendant in a sick-room. It is *always* possible to steal half an hour morning and evening to wash and change, and do one's hair

neatly, and the gain and comfort to the patient as well as to the nurse, is incalculable. This also would not be touched upon if my own recollections did not supply me with so many instances, where all this sort of care was considered to be absolutely worthless, and yet sick people have remarked afterwards how perfectly conscious they had been of all such shortcomings, and how such and such a tumbled cap, or shawl pinned on awry had been like a nightmare to them. Beauty itself is never more valuable than in a sick-room, and if laws could be passed on the subject, I should like to oblige all the pretty girls of my acquaintance to take it in turn to do a little nursing. I venture to say that no ball-room triumphs would ever compare with the delight their possession of God's greatest and best gift would afford to His sick and suffering creatures. But a nurse may always make herself look pleasant and agreeable, and if she have the true nursing instinct, the ready tact and sympathy which a sick-bed needs, she may come to be regarded as "better than pretty" by her grateful patient.





CHAPTER IX.

THE SPARE ROOM.



PERHAPS the kindest and wisest advice with regard to a spare room, would be the same as *Punch's* famous counsel to young people about to marry—a short and emphatic “Don’t.” In a large country house, perhaps even in a small country house, the case is different, for the spare room too often represents all the social variety which the owners can hope for, from year’s end to year’s end—and the only change from town life possible to half the bees in the great hive. It is scarcely possible to imagine an English country house, be it ever so humble, without its spare room, or the warm cordial welcome which would be sure to greet its succeeding inhabitants. How fresh and sweet and dainty do its simple appointments look to jaded eyes! how grateful its deep stillness to world-deafened ears! How impossible, in a brief summer

week, to believe that life can ever be found dull or monotonous amid such delicious calm! A walk in the gloaming in a country lane,—always supposing it is not too muddy—a cup of milk fresh from the cow, a crust off the home-baked loaf, are all treats of the first order to the tired cockney. I have often noticed the sort of half-pitying, half-contemptuous amazement with which my country hostess has beheld my delight at being installed in her spare room, my rapture at the sight of meadows and trees, or the sound of cawing rooks and the whirr of mowing machines. And how fresh and clean ought this country spare room to look! How inexcusable would be stain or spot, or evil odour amid such fragrant surroundings! Why should not the sheets *always* smell of lavender (as a matter of fact, they do not, I regret to state)? why should not there be *always* a jar of dried rose-leaves somewhere “around,” as our dear, epigrammatic, Yankee cousins say?

I do not think I really like silks and satins anywhere; I acknowledge that they fill me with a respectful admiration and awe for a short space, but that soon wears off, and my accidental splendour bores me all the rest of the time I have to dwell with it. No, the sort of guest-chamber which I love to occupy in the country is as simple as simple can be, and not so

crowded with furniture, but that a little space is left here and there where a box can be placed without its intruding itself as a nuisance for which one feels constantly impelled to apologise. If I am so fortunate as to find in a corner of my room a little frame, about two feet high made by the

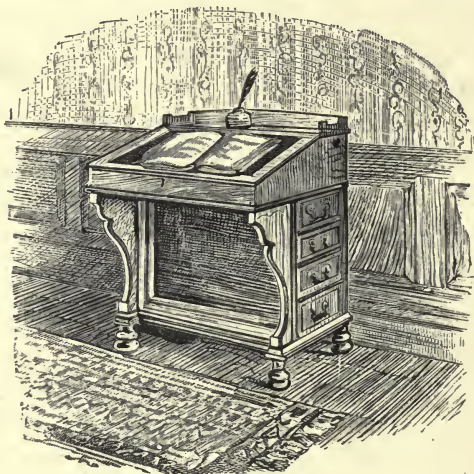


FIG. 31.

village carpenter, or the big boys of the household, for this box to stand on, then, indeed, I know what luxury means. You have your box so much more under your control if it is raised a little from the floor, and it is ever so much easier to pack and unpack. The taste and characteristics of the owners of the house, which you may be sure is to be found in all their surroundings,

is never more apparent than in the spare room. Sometimes your hostess tries to make you happy with looking-glasses, and I have shudderingly dwelt in a room with five large mirrors and sundry smaller ones; or else you are abashed to find how many gowns there is space for, and how few you have brought. But this extreme is better than the other: I have had to keep my draperies on all the available chairs in the room because I was afraid to open and shut the diminutive drawers of an exquisite, aged coffre which was provided for their reception. Beautiful as was this article of furniture, I would gladly have changed it for the commonest deal chest of drawers, long before the week was out. In spare rooms, as in all other rooms, money is not everything. It will not always buy taste, nor even comfort. Doubtless many of my readers who may happen to have led as varied a life as mine has been, will agree with me in the assertion, that as far as actual *comfort* goes, they have often possessed it in a greater degree under a very humble roof-tree, than beneath many a more splendid shelter. Everybody has their "little ways" (some of them very tiresome and odd, I admit), and there are splendid spare-rooms in which apparently no margin has been left, no indulgence shown, for any little individualities.

I should not be an Englishwoman writing to other Englishwomen if I did not take it for granted that we all desire most ardently that our guests should be thoroughly comfortable in their own rooms as well as happy in our society, and so I venture to suggest that visitors should not be fettered by too many rules, that, however homely the plenishing of the guest-chamber must needs be, it should never lack a few fresh flowers, a place to write (Fig. 31), pen and ink, a tiny table which can be moved about at pleasure, a dark blind for the window, and such trifles which often make the difference between comfort and discomfort, between a homelike feeling directly one arrives, and the incessant consciousness of being "on a visit."

But with regard to spare rooms in a town house, what advice can be given beyond and except that horrid "don't"? Especially true is this in London. No one has the least idea how many affectionate relations he possesses until he has an empty bedroom in a London house. It would almost appear as if such things as hotels and lodgings had ceased to exist, so incessant, so importunate are the entreaties to be "put up" for a couple of nights. And let me say here that visitors will prove much more of a tax in London than they ever are in the country. For rural visitors

scarcely ever seem to realise or comprehend how methodically mapped out is the life of a professional man living in London, how precious are to him the quiet early hours which they insist upon leaving behind them in the solitude of the country. Speaking as a London hostess, I may conscientiously assert that the guests who have kept me up latest at night, who have voted breakfast at 9.30 unreasonably early (without considering it was a whole hour later than our usual time) have been those people who ordinarily led the quietest and most clock-work existence in their country home. I will say nothing here of the impossibility of inducing them to regard distance or cab-hire as presenting any objection worth consideration in their incessant hunt after the bargains erroneously supposed by them to be obtainable in every shop. I have been scolded roundly by country visitors for keeping early hours and leading a quiet life in London, and I have never succeeded in impressing on them that in order to get through a great deal of hard work, both my husband and I found it necessary to do both.

To a professional man, with a small income, the institution of a spare room may be regarded as an income tax of several shillings in the pound. It is even worse than that; it means being forced to take in a succession of lodgers who don't pay,

who are generally amazingly inconsiderate and *exigeante*, and who expect to be amused and advised, chaperoned and married, and even nursed and buried. It is inconceivable upon what slender grounds, or for what far-fetched reasons, your distant acquaintance, or your—compared to yourself—rich relation, will unhesitatingly demand your hospitality. And oh, my unknown friends, how often are we tempted to say yes to the well-to-do relation who asks the question of us, and to find an excuse to shut out the poor one who really needs it? Ah how often?

It is really a trial to be unable to receive one's nearest kith and kin, one's sailor brother or sister home from India, because "we have no spare room," yet that very beginning, natural and delightful as it is, cheerfully and laughingly borne as the little privations it entails may be, is often the beginning of a stream of self-invited guests who literally worry us, if they don't exactly "eat us," out of house and home.

THE END.



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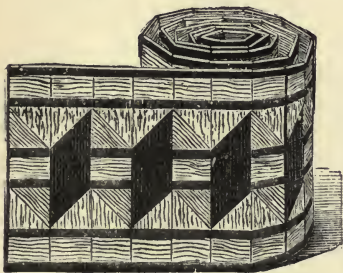
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